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The Cut Flower QUARTERLY

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts

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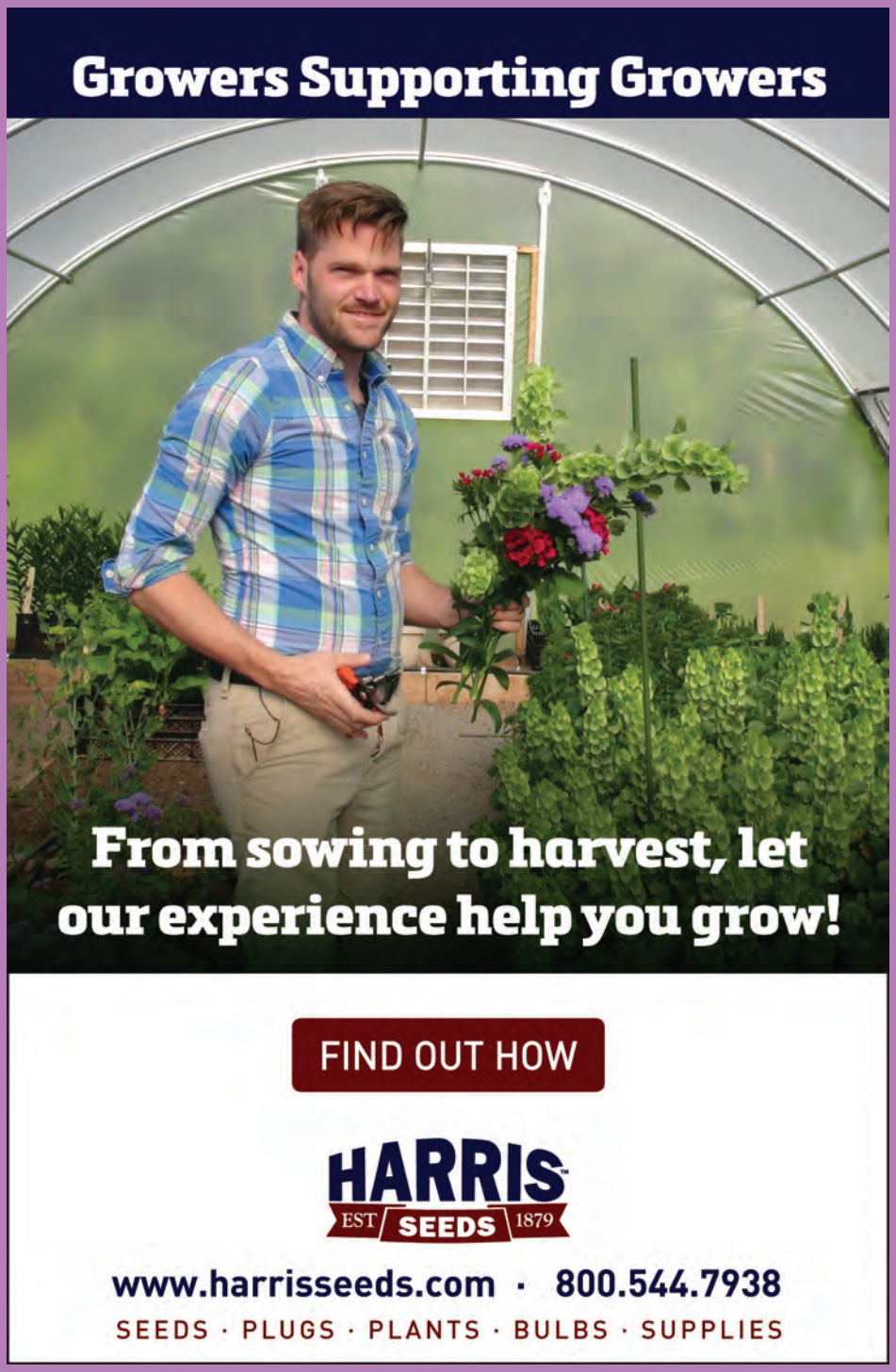

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From the PRESIDENT

Recapping Some Essentials

Dave Dowling

As I was thinking of a topic to cover for this issue, I logged onto the Members Only section of the ASCFG web site, and read through some of my old columns for ideas. I took the easy way out, and decided to compile some snippets into another article. Here are a few highlights from past issues:

- Make time to spend with friends and family. Don't always work seven days a week. Trust your employees to do their jobs. You can always be just a phone call away.
- Brighten someone's day with flowers. Whether it's someone you know, or a child at the farmers' market, surprise them with flowers. If you have extra flowers, give your customers a few stems. They'll remember your generosity.
- Give your customers what they want. Quality products, helpful service, and a smile are things that can help your company thrive. Enjoy your work, or get a different job.
- Always be on the lookout for new material to grow. New offerings may keep customers excited about what you grow. You never know where you'll find the next flower that will help pay your bills. (We all know, the ASCFG is a great place to start.)
- Everyone needs to learn *new stuff*: Even old dogs and old cut flower growers could use a new trick every once in a while.
- Every year we should plan for our biggest season ever, then go out and make it happen. Grow some new varieties, increase production, and add new markets, florists, or wholesalers. Maybe start doing weddings or events. Find something to do and look for ways to make it happen. It's up to you. Like your Mom said, "You won't know until you try it". Mom was usually talking about something like turnips, not cut flowers, but you get the idea.
- We all know how important regular customers are to the success of a business. Regular customers are the ones who pay your bills. Starbucks doesn't survive on the occasional coffee drinker who stops by a couple times a year. They thrive on the millions of customers who stop in every day for a cup of caffeine.
- Flower quality must be the most important thing on every flower grower and seller's mind. A customer—especially a new customer—who purchases poor quality flowers may never purchase again. All the promotion in the world can't overcome a poor quality product.
- When you find employees who are right for your company, invest in them with not just a fair salary, but also with realistic expectations, and recognition of a job well done. Taking your employees to ASCFG events or even the National Conference goes a long way in letting them know that you value them as an important part of your business. Every employee should want to come to work and be concerned for the well-being of your company. Keeping employees happy can be as easy (and cheap) as keeping popsicles in the freezer for those hot summer days, or offering paid vacation and other benefits if you can afford the added cost.
- Plant an extra 100 sunflowers every week, and set that money aside for the Conference.
- Follow through on your promises. If you offer to help someone, follow through. If you tell a customer you'll have a flower on a certain date, do your best to have it for him or her. If you've said in the past that you'll make it to the ASCFG Conference "next time" then I guess I'll see you in Ontario or Ohio.

Reading through all the archives of *The Cut Flower Quarterly* reminded me of this great body of information that is as close as your computer. Members can view and read back issues, and search for topics of interest. Want to know about sweet peas? Just search "sweet pea" and you'll have enough material at your disposal to grow sweet peas like a pro. Pick any topic, search, and you'll be rewarded with great information. Just don't get sidetracked for the whole afternoon—there are flowers to pick, seeds to sow, and a lot of work to get done on the farm.

Dave Dowling is a Sales Representative and Warehouse Manager for Ednie Flower Bulb. Contact him at dave@ednieflowerbulb.com

Urban Buds: City Grown Flowers

Jodi Helmer

Farmer-florists bring an abandoned flower farm back to life

The first time Karen "Mimo" Davis and Miranda Duschack saw a farm in the Dutchtown neighborhood of St. Louis, Missouri, Miranda took one look at the condemned, vandalized property with an ancient farmhouse and greenhouse with broken panes of glass, nonfunctioning waterline, and countless other projects and said, "Who's going to buy this?" Mimo took one look at it and said, "I'll take it."

The couple bought the property in 2012 and started Urban Buds: City Grown Flowers.

Mimo and Miranda met while working as extension agents at Lincoln University Cooperative Extension. As their friendship developed into a romance, the couple planned their future, which included a shared dream to farm.

Mimo had a background in flower farming but Miranda, who came to Missouri after growing fruits and vegetables at a Franciscan convent in Dubuque, Iowa, admits she was initially skeptical about growing fresh flowers, especially because the couple planned to start farming in the middle of the recession. But Mimo was resolute in her desire.

"I just felt that in central Missouri, there were a lot of great vegetable farmers and zero flower farmers. When tomatoes are in season, there are a ton of tomatoes at the market; when freesias are in season, we're the only game in town," Mimo explains.

The decision was made when the couple went to visit one of the florists Mimo delivered to from 1990 to 2000 (when she grew flowers on a farm in Ashland, Missouri) who told them, "We'll buy anything you have. Bring it."

Everything Old is New Again

Mimo and Miranda forged ahead, transforming the abandoned and overgrown landscape into a flower farm bursting with color. It's a point of pride for the pair that their farm, Urban Buds: City Grown Flowers, is on the site of a flower farm that dated back to the 1800s.

After purchasing the farm, the couple tracked down one of the previous owners—a man in his 80s who was the third-generation farmer to grow flowers on the land—and invited him over. He stopped in to visit and spent time telling Mimo and Miranda stories about the farm and showing them photos of how it used to look.

The home, greenhouse, and land changed hands several times since the last blooms were grown onsite. Mimo and Miranda were thrilled to bring it back to life as a flower farm—and their customers loved the farm, too.

The first official arrangement Urban Buds delivered went to a woman celebrating her ninetieth birthday; she'd ordered her wedding flowers from the original flower farmers on their Dutchtown property 52 years earlier.

Since then, Urban Buds has expanded to include five contiguous city lots owned by Mimo and Miranda along with two rented lots, totaling almost an acre. The couple grows 70 different varieties of flower from azaleas to zinnias.

Farming in an urban area wasn't an intentional choice: It was close to their work at Lincoln University—until 2017, when Mimo left her job to farm full-time, both women continued working in the extension office 40 hours per week—and closer to their friends than Mimo's former flower farm. Being just a few miles from the iconic St. Louis Arch also has its benefits. Their farmers' market booth is just 2.5 miles from the farm, which means customers can see where their flowers are grown.

"We're so accessible," Miranda says. "One of the real benefits of urban agriculture is that our customers can see what's happening on the farm in real time."

Thanks to its location in a residential neighborhood, passers-by can always see what's growing on the farm, but there are few on-farm sales. Instead, Urban Buds blooms are sold through the Tower Grove Farmer's Market and wholesale accounts, including the florist who encouraged them to pursue flower farming.

The demand for their local blooms has blossomed. In 2016, Urban Buds expanded to a double booth at the market and Miranda says customers often say, "Your flowers are so much more unusual and last so much longer than the flowers I get at the grocery store."

One of the big differences, according to Mimo, is fragrance. Urban Buds specializes in growing fragrant flowers that don't ship well, including sweet peas, lupines, and tuberose.

Location Matters

"[Most] of the flowers that are shipped in are bred not to have fragrance," says Miranda. "I had one woman cry over a bunch of sweet peas because she remembered them from her grandmother."

It's not just the fragrant flowers that are popular; all local blooms are sought-after, according to Mimo.

"People here just don't know their flowers; when they see a ranunculus they are just so blown away that it was grown here in St. Louis, locally, and they've never seen it before," she says.

That "blown away" feeling led customers from the farmer's market to start asking Mimo and Miranda about doing the flowers for their weddings, and the couple grew their business again. Since their first wedding bouquets were delivered in 2015, the bridal business has grown to account for 50 percent of their revenue—and the couple hopes Urban Buds will continue growing.

To that end, the couple added high tunnels to extend their growing season from February through November, and plan to extend to year-round growing in 2018 thanks to a grant from the Missouri Department of Agriculture.

"It's been really special to bring this farm back to life," Miranda says.

Jodi Helmer is a freelance writer in North Carolina. Contact her at jodi@jodihelmer.com

"One of the real benefits of urban agriculture is that our customers can see what's happening on the farm in real time."

Tulipmania

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick

The tulip. The flower that created Tulipmania in the Netherlands in the 1630s is causing quite a stir in the cut flower world these days. New varieties, colors, shapes, and sizes have captured the hearts of farmers and florists alike. 'Belle Epoque', 'Brown Sugar', 'Renown Unique', and dozens more with crazy names are quickly becoming a staple of our spring designs.

The challenge with tulips is their harvest and postharvest treatments. They need to be picked at the exact right moment—often they must be picked all at once. This could mean constant picking day after day for a few short weeks. Planting a range of early-, middle-, and late-blooming varieties is no guarantee, as erratic weather can influence their bloom time.

Growing great tulips is a feat in itself. But once you grow them, selling them is a whole other issue. Florists may not need the colors you have. They might think the cost of fancy tulips is too high to buy more than a few. Or they may buy dozens of bunches, but thousands of stems might be too many.

Despite the challenges of selling tulips, many growers put sales low on the priority list when it's time to buy bulbs in the summer and fall. Price of the bulb (sometimes on sale), popularity (you saw it on Instagram and you have to have it), and space in the tulip bed seem to be bigger considerations. But selling thousands of bulbs in a matter of weeks is harder than it sounds.

This is where STORING comes in. Many growers store their tulips in order to extend their window sales. Tulips can be stored either wet or dry. The idea of storing tulips, either in water or dry packed, seems like a great solution to the problem of too many tulips blooming at once and not enough immediate sales outlets. However, storing is tricky and can lead to all sorts of problems.

'Brown Sugar'

Ellen's Story

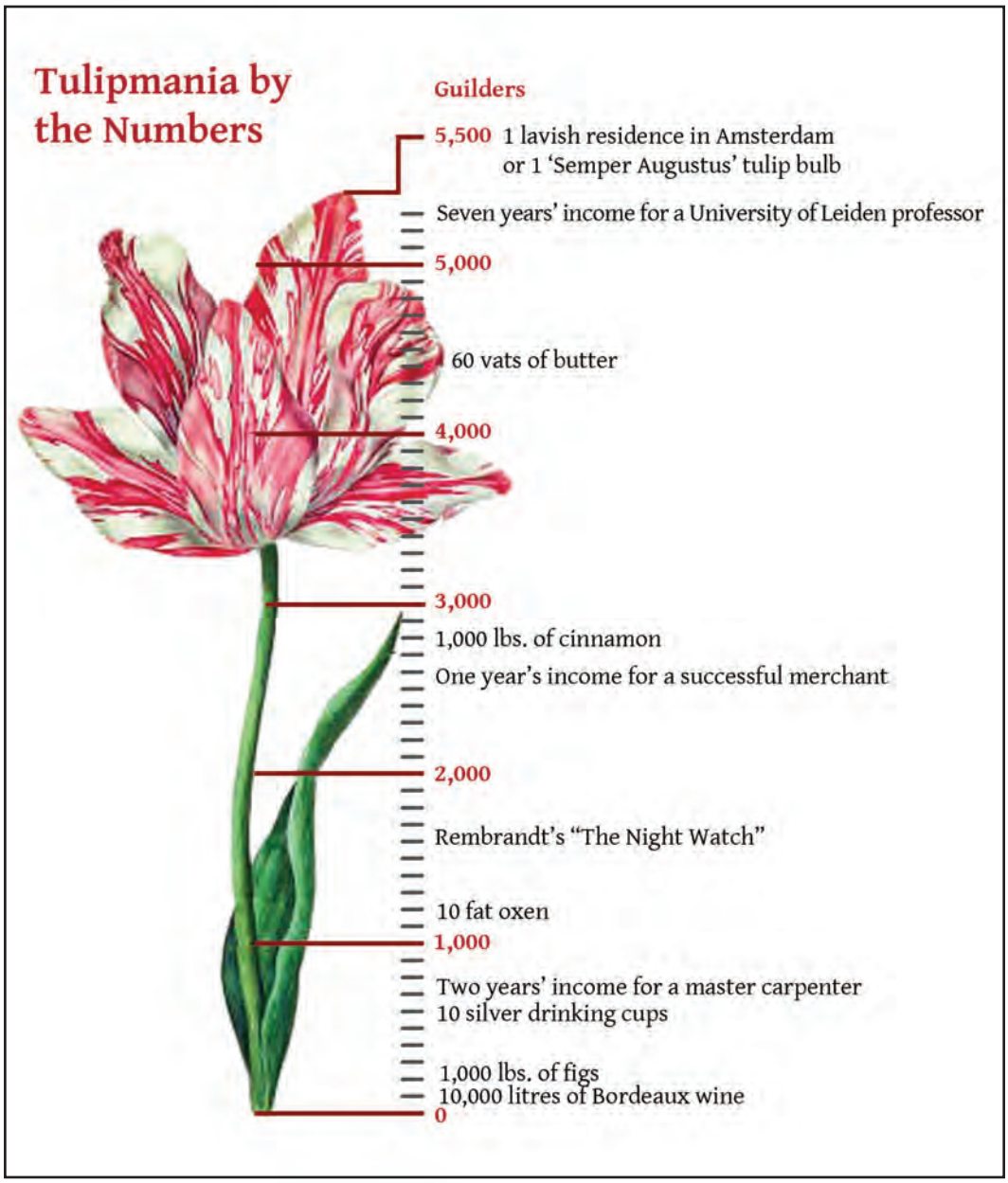
This year we were beyond excited about the tulips that were coming through our door. Yes, they all seemed to come at once. Yes, we were getting texts throughout the day from multiple growers saying "There are MORE—can you use MORE?" We were loving them…until we weren't.

The first week of May we had several growers who still had tulips on their availability lists. With one exception, the offerings were not described as stored tulips. For florists like us who do singles orders and weekly orders, vase life is critical. The tulips we had been getting for the previous four weeks were lasting anywhere from 7-10 days. That week, we decided not to order from the grower who revealed that the flowers were stored. Experience held us back. I knew that vase life for stored tulips could be compromised and I knew we would be looking to have the stems last at least as long as the previous stems had. We did, however, order from several other growers who advertised tulips that week. The first bunches arrived and when they were unwrapped, there was visual damage to the petals. The petals looked as if the

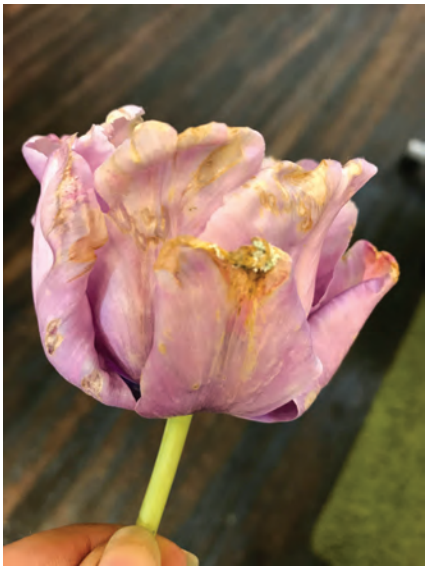
flower had been laid down wet. Additionally, the flowers were fully colored and almost to the point of being fully blown open. We threw these out right away. We couldn't risk sending out an inferior product.

The next batch that came in did not have any visual problems. They were fully colored but they were closed and from the outside, looked fine. We loaded up our weekly orders and special event orders for the day with these flowers, and sent them out for delivery. As we continued on with our day, we kept several bunches of these tulips in buckets around the shop (not in the cooler). As they began to open, we noticed two things: they were moldy inside and as they opened, they almost immediately fell apart. You can imagine our panic as we had already sent a dozen orders out with these flowers in them.

A series of uncomfortable tasks followed. First, we called the clients who were receiving the flowers that day to warn them of the problem and offer them a refund or a new arrangement. Next we notified the growers who had supplied the flowers so that they didn't sell them to anyone else. We provided photos of the problems so that they understood what we were dealing with. Finally, we called Dave. (Isn't that what everyone does in a flower crisis?) Dave warned us that mold spores can spread and urged us to get rid of the tulips and scrub down the cooler to ensure this wouldn't happen. Into the trash went $1600 worth of tulips. Additionally, we paid three of our staff to empty out the cooler, wash it all down, and put everything back. While this was bad, the equally terrible problem was that we then didn't have enough flowers for the weddings and events we had scheduled for that week.



Petal damage on stored tulips



Tulips affected by mold during storage.

It was sad times that week. I didn't cry, but it was close. In an attempt to learn from the situation, I reached out to Laura Beth, to see if she thought it was appropriate for me to retell this story and the resulting suggestions on the Maryland Cut Flower Growers email list. We both agreed that everyone could learn from our experience.

Dave's Thoughts

- Don't try to hold tulips to sell after the season is over. Quality can be diminished and no one should be selling a product with diminished quality.
- Warmer weather makes it nearly impossible to sell tulips. If it's too warm at a farmers' market, the tulips may blow open. Event florists may try to use them for outdoor events where they can't take the heat. Delivering them to the florist or the final customer can be difficult in 70-80 degree weather, especially if your delivery vehicle is not air-conditioned.
- It's better to use a tunnel and get tulips ready 2-3 weeks earlier than to have them go bad by storing them too long at the end of the season.
- When faced with a complaint like the one described above, try to determine if the problem was caused before or after delivery. Florists may try to hold flowers in the cooler too long too, instead of trashing them, even though trashing them may be the best thing to do. If the problem is the grower's fault, a full refund or replacement flowers should be given.
- The best way to store tulips is to hold "tight" tulips for up to one week in water in a 34-38 degree cooler, or up to two weeks if stored dry and wrapped in a 34-38 degree cooler. Storing longer than that, you are risking botrytis damage or having the flowers dry out. Additionally, if the bloom is not perfectly dry when stored in the cooler, you are risking petal damage.

Ellen's Thoughts

- If you're selling to florists, let them know that the tulips have been stored and might be better for event work rather than single orders or weekly orders. Let the florists decide if they want them.
- If you are selling at the market, don't risk your good name and reputation selling flowers that might not hold up well.
- Plan for another crop that will come right after tulips so there isn't as much pressure to extend the buying window.

Laura Beth's Thoughts

The biggest reason that farmers sell second-quality product is that we don't plan to fail. We buy 1,000 tulip bulbs hoping to sell all of the blooms. We plant 1,000 dahlia tubers, hoping every one will be viable. We plant 100 sunflowers, hoping the bunny rabbits won't see them.

But bunnies happen, and sometimes florists don't have a need for your gorgeous orange parrot tulips in April. Instead of expecting to sell every last stem and then panicking when you can't, I suggest an alternative: planning for failure.

This is not a pessimistic outlook, but rather a realistic one. No one is perfect, and neither is a farm. That's why, when I plan my season, I put failure into the equation. Here's a simple example of what I mean:

In Field A, I will plant 100 tulips, 100 snapdragons, and 100 dahlias. Below, I've made a chart of how many sellable stems I can cut from each plant over the course of the season if everything goes perfectly. If I sell every stem, the total sales will be $1525.

But everything will not go perfectly. So, I shave 40% off that perfect sales amount of $1525. That number, $915, is now my minimum sales goal for these crops. Then I shave 20% off of the perfect sales goal, to get $1220. That's now my maximum sales goal for these crops.

Every year, when I make my crop plan, I expect to lose between 20% and 40% of what we grow to bugs, weather, slow market, my own mistakes, volunteers stepping on plants, etc. Believe it or not, every single year (this is our fifth year in business) we have lost almost exactly 30%, which is right in the middle.

Of course, we constantly strive to bring that percentage down. But expecting some amount of loss is important because I will plan my finances knowing that there will be some failures. So, when I can't sell those orange parrot tulips, I'll throw them in the compost pile instead of trying to sell them a few weeks too late. I'll know that loss was coming, and I won't be as tempted to sell second quality product as a result.

Optimism Meets Reality

Tulips are gorgeous, early spring flowers, and growing them makes sense for many of us. Simple solutions like calculating how many stems you can realistically sell, storing them carefully, and then accepting that you might not sell all of them can make the process a lot smoother. If there are issues with a florist, responding quickly and giving refunds when necessary are crucial steps to maintaining a good relationship. We all have accidentally sold faulty flowers before, and we'll probably do it again—the important thing is to take responsibility and learn from those mistakes. There's always next year!

Ellen Frost is owner of
Local Color Flowers
Contact her at ellen@locoflo.com

Laura Beth Resnick is owner of
Butterbee Farm
Contact her at butterbeefarm@gmail.com

Field A Crop Plan

Crop	Number of Bulbs or Plants	Optimum Sellable Stems per Crop	Price per Stem	Optimum Sales
Tulips	100	100	$1.50	$150
Snapdragons	100	500	$.75	$375
Dahlias	100	800	$1.25	$1,000
		Total Optimum Sales		$1,525

Every year, when I make my crop plan, I expect to lose between 20% and 40% of what we grow to bugs, weather, slow market, my own mistakes, volunteers stepping on plants, etc. Believe it or not, every single year (this is our fifth year in business) we have lost almost exactly 30%, which is right in the middle.

What is New and Safe for Pollinators in the Insecticide World?

Stanton Gill

Cut flower growers are constantly dealing with insect issues. Sometimes pests are at levels you can live with, and other times you need to apply something to keep a population in check. Every environmentally-aware person is concerned about pesticides that impact pollinators. In the cut flower business pollinators are not really essential to the production of the crop but growers still want to control insects without harming the pollinators visiting the cut flower plants.

The incidents in 2014 and 2015 involving the neonicotinoid dinoetefuran, which killed bumblebees on treated linden trees, raised the public awareness of impact of pesticides on our pollinator buddies. The chemical companies shifted their emphasis to new classes of pesticides that kill specific groups of insects with minimal impact on pollinators and beneficial organisms.

One of the newer materials to come onto the market is a product sold by the Bayer Company. This product was released on May 1 of 2017, marketed under the name Altus with the chemical name of Flupyradifurone.

Flupyradifurone, a new active ingredient in the butenolide class of chemistry, is a systemic and translaminar insecticide which controls major sucking pests, such as aphids, whiteflies, psyllids, and others. I have not had a chance to trial it yet but CPS is sending some to me to try out. The price is running around $350 for a half gallon.

I have been in contact with fellow entomologists who have tested it on whiteflies, aphids, and thrips, and all are reporting very good results as both a foliar spray and as a soil drench. Many are testing it on several species of beneficial organisms. It looks good in most of the trials but the final report will not be out until the end of the year.

Here is what Bayer is saying about this material:

- No application timing restrictions means growers can apply Altus before, during and after bloom.
- New active ingredient in the ornamentals market offers control of major sucking pests, such as aphids, whiteflies, and psyllids.
- Compatibility with honey bees, bumblebees, and many beneficial arthropods offers application flexibility.
- Classified as a Reduced Risk product by the EPA.
- Short, four-hour re-entry interval in most states simplifies operations.
- Foliar or drench options offer flexibility to match the best control method with the target pest and crop.
- Crop flexibility allows for use in greenhouses and nurseries on ornamental plants, vegetable transplants, and indoor vegetable production.
- Rotational chemistry reduces risk of resistance and works well as part of an integrated pest management program.

The label lists leafhopper and planthoppers, both of which are problems on some cut flower species. Black vine weevil larvae are also listed, as well as several species of mealybugs. Altus provides a good systemic insecticide with minimal collateral damage to pollinators and beneficial organisms. In the summer of 2017 we will be testing Altus for thrips control and for Japanese maple scale. We will have results late this fall from these trials.

It has been a cool spring on the East Coast so far but when temperatures roar up this summer, expect spider mite populations to ascend. Crocosmia is one cut flower you will clearly have to monitor for spider mites. You know from past years which cut flower crops are most prone to spider mites; monitor these for two-spotted spider might by placing a light colored paper under the branches and rapping sharply to dislodge the mites onto the paper.

Bio-pesticide for Control

Several years ago we tested Met-52, which contains an entomopathogenic fungus called *Metarhizium anisopliae*; it knocked spider mites out very well. It was off the market for part of 2016 but is back in 2017. Use a fine mist spray and hit the undersides of foliage for best application to kill mites. Another entomopathogenic fungus you can use for mite control is *Isaria fumosoresea*, sold under the name Preferral and with the same application techniques as the Met-52.

You have very good options with mite growth regulators (IGRs), which work well on larvae, and protnymph and deutonymph stages of spider mites. Two IGRs labeled for cut flowers for mite control are Hexygon and Tetrasan. These are contact materials so again you need a fine mist and hit the undersides of foliage.

If you prefer to use a systemic miticide you have another option: Spiromesfen, sold under the name Judo.

Lots of luck with the season, and may you be relatively pest free.

Stanton Gill is Extension Specialist in Nursery and Greenhouse IPM, Central Maryland Research and Education Center, University of Maryland Extension and Professor with the Landscape technology Program, Montgomery College. Contact him at sgill@umd.edu

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Camellias and Cut Flowers

The Trade in Cut Flowers—Its Development and Statistics

Florists, Floriculture and Floral Decoration Financially and Socially Considered — Studies in Bouquets, Epergnes, and Floral Ornamentation

I found this article, originally published April 10, 1870, in the online archives of the *New York Times*. The exquisite prose, the detailed analysis of stems cut and sold, the description of steam-heated greenhouses, and the wide use of floral designs were too fascinating not to share. Please note: the curiously variable spelling, punctuation, and grammar are copied directly from the original text.

Judy Laushman

The artificiality of cities is well illustrated by the flower trade; for, whereas, the world over, cities excepted, Summer naturally constitutes the floral season, in cities the order of the calendar is reversed. Greenhouses have triumphed over the thermometer, and the vast demands of society have made Winter, in the Metropolis, the great season of floral activity. The Summer demand, insignificant financially, is mostly filled by what may be termed the Floral Bohomians, whose appearance in force may be anticipated about the 13th of May. Arabs of the trade—itinerants in a business point of view—floral nomads *per se* and by profession—with the first dawn of warmish weather they crawl from their hibernation at Hoboken and Union Hill, and swarm like flies across the ferry, with stock in hand, and alert for a customer.

From June to October you may count fifty of them any day in the course of a jaunt from City Hall-square to Thirtieth-street, and as importunate and persistent they are as mosquitoes. They frequent all thoroughfares—are stationary nowhere. A glass case, in which to dispose wares, mounted upon a camp-stool, answers for a place of business; the whole stock in trade consisting of from thirty to fifty bouquets, ranging in price from five to fifty cents. Fifty-cent specimens are, however, reckoned very risky, being above the ordinary cost of a button-hole ornament. Five cents buys a very passable bouquet for the button-hole at any street corner; and fifty cents is demanded with evident misgivings.

Ordinarily these Bedouins of Flora average from $5 to $10 a day in sales, receiving a stated salary of seventy-five cents or selling on a commission of one-fourth of the profits. A few itinerate with baskets; a few with bouquet-holders, which consist of bits of perforated board, the holes being for the reception of bouquet-handles. The great ambition of the vender is, however, to be the owner of a glass case and a camp-stool, and no Floral Saracen is considered as established in business until the dignity has been attained. It is the Utopia of members of the clan—the Elysium of

the profession—the *sine qua non* of standing and respectability.

They hail from New-Jersey mostly, these itinerants, and are in the employ of the flower farms of Hoboken and Union Hill. They have a country shrewdness, too, manifested in putting the unsold residuum of a day's itinerary in a wet mop over night and saving it for the next morning's traffic. The flowers lose their fragrance, of course, but that is easily remedied by sprinkling them with a little perfumery—sometimes of the wrong odor, perhaps, but always stronger than the original. A violet smelling of musk or a rose redolent of neroli is an original thing In Nature, to be sure, but then few New-Yorkers are sufficiently *au fait* to be aware of it.

Sources of Demand for Cut Flowers

Quite distinct from this guerrilla business in flower products is the great metropolitan trade in cut flowers, the receipts of which are now not less than two and a half millions a year. September, December, and January represent the heaviest demand; and from February to June there is generally a season of lull. The two pre-eminent sources of demand are for Easter decoration and decoration of the New-year's holidays, beginning with the festival of the Nativity. More regular, though not so large in the aggregate, is the demand occasioned by the theaters, by wedding occasions, balls, and dinner parties; and all these sources of trade are at their climax during the Winter season.

The demand for funeral occasions, now very large, is more regular still—for death, unless epidemic, is very regular all the year round, and has no exclusive respect for particular days and seasons. White flowers made up in wreaths and crosses are *en regle* for funeral decoration. The consumption for this purpose, owing partly to the influence of Parisian and partly to that of Southern taste, is reckoned greater in New York than in any other city in the world—Paris excepted.

Another leading source of demand is occasioned by the departure of steamers at the beginning of the Summer *hegira*. For farewell presentation the basket, ranging from $10 to $25, is *de rigeur*, a single steamer not unfrequently taking off thirty or forty baskets, aggregating at $500 or $600. This demand, though scattered through the year, is heaviest during the Summer months.

For dinner ornamentation the call has been unusually heavy this Winter, dinners *a la Russe* having been the order. The floral decoration of several dinners has exceeded $500, tables being loaded with flowers. The system has been to uprear a sort of floral mountain in the middle of the table, putting at the top a looking-glass lake fringed with flowers and African ferns. Bouquets are placed at the plates of the guests, who are expected to wear button-hole bouquets by way of carrying out the artistic completeness of the fête; and no gentleman at dinner party or ball is esteemed to be dressed *point-device* without the customary floral nugget in his button-hole.

Guesses and Estimates

The great sources of demand having been enumerated, the estimates of florists may be taken as to their pecuniary value. A prominent member of the trade, and, therefore, an expert, guesses:

For Easter decoration	$400,000
Holidays, public and private consumption	$600,000
Weddings	$300,000
Theatrical bouquet throwing	$250,000
Funeral occasions	$200,000
Farewell presentation of all kinds	$200,000
Dinner ornamentation, button-hole wear, social presentation, balls and miscellaneous	$550,000
Total	$2,500,000

Exact figures are unattainable, but, embodying the guess of an expert, the table no doubt presents the trade with tolerable accuracy, both as to aggregate and as to relative sources of demand. Few dealers keep any statistics of their own business, and can tell nothing of the extent of it except by reference to the day-book—a process too tedious to be entered upon merely to accommodate an inquisitive member of the Press. Only one exception to this rule is presented in the business of the very heaviest florists and floriculturists in the City. This gentleman keeps an account of every flower cut on his premises and an accurate journal of the progress of rare exotics, jotting down observations as to the metamorphosis of plants by culture, which, by the way, constitutes a field of botanical study not sufficiently investigated and full of strange phenomena.

A Greenhouse in a Greenhouse

His flower farm is situated near Flushing, L. I., and of the dozen large ones in the vicinity of the city, is the very largest. It is worth visiting, as the journal in question is worth perusing. Here are twenty-five greenhouses in all. Fourteen are 100 feet in length; five are 150 feet long; and the remaining six are in length fifty feet—making in all a greenhouse length of 2,450 feet. The five longest ones are devoted to the culture of the camilia and other large plants. The cost of erecting and fitting up the greenhouses was $40,000, exclusive of heating pipes, furnaces and boilers, which foot up $10,000 more.

Two and a half miles of cast-iron pipe, a third of a foot in diameter, diffuse the heated steam from the boilers, which, like land leviathans, repose in their brick recesses, indulging in an occasional spout to prove their leviathanship. The Winter con-

Few dealers keep any statistics of their own business, and can tell nothing of the extent of it except by reference to the day-book—a process too tedious to be entered upon merely to accommodate an inquisitive member of the Press. Only one exception to this rule is presented in the business of the very heaviest florists and floriculturists in the City. This gentleman keeps an account of every flower cut on his premises and an accurate journal of the progress of rare exotics, jotting down observations as to the metamorphosis of plants by culture, which, by the way, constitutes a field of botanical study not sufficiently investigated and full of strange phenomena.

sumption of coal averages 250 tons; and the yearly cut of flowers is about half a million. A table of their distribution will give an idea of the rêpertoire of the florist:

Double primroses	120,000
White stocks	80,000
Carnations	50,000
Violets	40,000
Roses	35,000
Tuberoses	30,000
Bouvardias	25,000
Eupatorium	20,000
Begonia	10,000
Ageratum	10,000
Geranium leaf	25,000
Azalias, Jasmines, Pelargoniums, Heliotropes, & c	50,000
Total	$495,000

A flower farm like this is sort of a world within a world. At first, on entering one seems to himself to have been admitted into dreamland, in his sober senses, without the trouble of dropping to sleep. It is as if one had suddenly taken leave of the world at large to enter a world of beauty, of tropical luxury, of Elysian odor, with the mere opening and shutting of a gate; and, incontmently (*sic*), you break into scraps and ripples of rhyme, in spite of your determination to study analytically. Leaving this largest of general gardens, one may take a sentimental journey to Jersey City, where is situated the very largest garden of roses on the continent, the annual cut of which averages 100,000.

The dashing Prince Albert, the fragrant deep-red Jaques Minot and the yellow (illegible) or scutless tea-rose constitute the varieties mostly in demand for bouquet manufacture. The clove-scented carnation, of rather spicy odor, is most sought popularly, but is so rare as to be exceedingly expensive.

The aggregate of primroses consumed in bouquets yearly is probably about 2,500,000; carnations, 1,500,000; camelias, 1,000,000; roses, 800,000; tuberoses, 500,000; violets, 1,250,000; cape jasmines, 500,000. An expert ventures a guess as to the wholesale valuation of these six staples:

Camelias	$100,000
Tuberoses	50,000
Roses	50,000
Cape jasmine	30,000
Carnations	25,000
Violets	25,000
Total	$280,000

Exact statistics are however at a discount in this country, and seekers for information are debarred in this as in many other limbs of the great tree known as business, from the materials for the elimination of exact statements.

The business is one of large profits and yearly increasing transactions; though even as late as 1850, floriculture was in its infancy in this country (or vicinity) and floral ornamentation was regarded as snobbish and foreign. Demand was limited, and cut flowers were of high price. For ten years, floriculture struggled to create a market; but it was not until the beginning of the war that the whole floral trade of the City exceeded three-fourths of a million a year. The war, magician-like, conjured into being a demand equal to a couple of millions annually; and this demand has been continued and increased since the way by other stimulating agencies.

Dramatic Popularity

The theatrical demand was limited until the advent of the ballet-drama. The "Black Crook" it was that first developed theatrical bouquet-throwing into a popular mania, which has been continued by the comic opera, the opera bouffe, and the English burlesque. The theatrical demand has more than quadrupled during the past four years; and

it is now customary for some leading florists to buy the monopoly of a theater, to the exclusion of all floral itinerants and the consequent introduction of a regiment of peddlers in the pay of the florist of selling his wares on commission.

At the theaters, in consequence, bouquets are expensive luxuries. A button-hole decoration may be bought for twenty-five cents just before the curtain comes down, provided the vender is desperate from unsold stock; but generally, at a leading theatre fifty cents is demanded with the utmost *sang-froid*.

The *rationale* is evident. The florist has the monopoly and presumes upon it, paying for the privilege of the theater, and having his own profit to make, exclusive of the renumeration of his peddlers, either in salary or commission, which latter is more business-like, besides having the effect to render the peddler extremely anxious and importunate.

The members of the ballet and its stars are especially pelted with bouquets and baskets at the hands of languishing young gentlemen, though, *inter nous*, the manager frequently foots the florist's bills for the same, which leads to the deduction that the young gentlemen in question are mere salaried claquers. It has become customary, in fact, when a manager wishes to create a furor, to fill a box or two with handsome claquers, whose business it is to shower bouquets at proper intervals, by the dozen or score—the assistance of a boy with a basket being required to carry them off, to be slyly deposited with original claquers for a second demonstration. The mania for bouquet-showering was at its height during the season of the Bateman Opera Bouffe Troupe; though it is currently reported that Lydia Thompson, during the season at Niblo's, was the recipient of a greater number of bouquets than has ever been received by any one actress pending a single season. However, considered as a thermometer of popularity, floral enthusiasm is delusive, since the florist regularly sends his bill to the manager for liquidation.

A very active cause of the augmentation of the trade for the last three or four years has been the newly-developed taste for the decoration of stands at public meetings. At the last Presidential Convention, (Democratic) at Tammany Hall, the desk was literally a bank of tube roses, geraniums and noisettes, costing over $1,000, exclusive of materials presented or donated.

Again, the habit of using flowers lavishly for religious decoration has been greatly stimulated during the past four or five years through the influence of several leading clergymen, the thunderer of the Plymouth pulpit having perhaps been principally instrumental in the introduction of the custom, especially in the Midsummer festival known as Lily Sunday among leading congregations in the Metropolis and suburbs. The Lily Sunday decoration consists of a lavish wreathing of the interior with white lilies, particularly in the neighborhood of the altar, and has led to an exclusive use of flowers on all religious occasions of a joyous kind. For cut flowers, there are, however, only two seasons of great demand for religious decoration, which are represented by the Easter season and the holiday season beginning with the Nativity. The last festival of the Nativity consumed alone over $200,000 worth in the decoration of altars and interiors. The value of the decorations at St. Alban's on the occasion was $2,500. Elsewhere, $1,500 was nothing uncommon; and even among the poorer congregations, $300 was the minimum.

The augmentation occasioned may be imagined. Twelve years since there was only one florist's store on Broadway, and only three in the City, where there are now Titania's bowers by the dozen almost, and they were situated in basements, with the exception of Second-avenue dealer, who did business above ground.

Basements are now tabooed, and there are twenty large first-floor stores on Broadway devoted to the business, besides half a dozen elsewhere—principally in Fourteenth, Seventeenth, and Thirtieth Streets.

Floral Fashions

Only seven dealers own their gardens, the rest depending mostly on small gardens in the outskirts of the City, owned by Germans and Englishmen, and only containing two or three greenhouses. The owners of the small gardens in question send out peddlers during the Summer—floral Bohemians—and sell their stock unmanufactured during the Winter months. For Winter manufacture, New-York draws heavily on Philadelphia and Baltimore for camelias; but during the Summer, the great Long Island nurseries supply them in abundance. In Winter camelias often run as high as $7.50 a hundred; for the remainder of the year $2.50 is the standard. Roses are still more expensive at certain season; tuberoses observe about the same range; violets cost fifty cents a hundred in Summer and about $2 in Winter. Rare tints of the camelia are often sold singly at twenty cents, but fifteen cents is the standard. Daisies, sprigs of mignonette, sprays of evergreen, African ferns and baskets, added to articles previously mentioned, complete the répertoire. Of baskets, used by the hundred, the more delicate are imported, the common and coarser kinds being produced here by a German artisan, whose single manufactory supplies the trade. Swiss boxes, once popular, are out of vogue. Though very elegant and antique-looking, they were found too unwieldy for long popularity.

In the manufacture of bouquets, considered as a high art, the system of putting the harmonious colors in juxtaposition has been superseded by the Parisian system of arranging by complementary colors. Prices vary very little from year's end to year's end. Ordinary bouquets of variegated flowers are $2; bouquets with white camelia centers, encircled with tuberoses and violets, $4 to $5; balls of white tea-roses and tuberoses, with white bells drooping, $5 to $7; floral baskets, (stock,) $25; special designs in baskets, $25 to $200; flower pieces, $200 to $400.

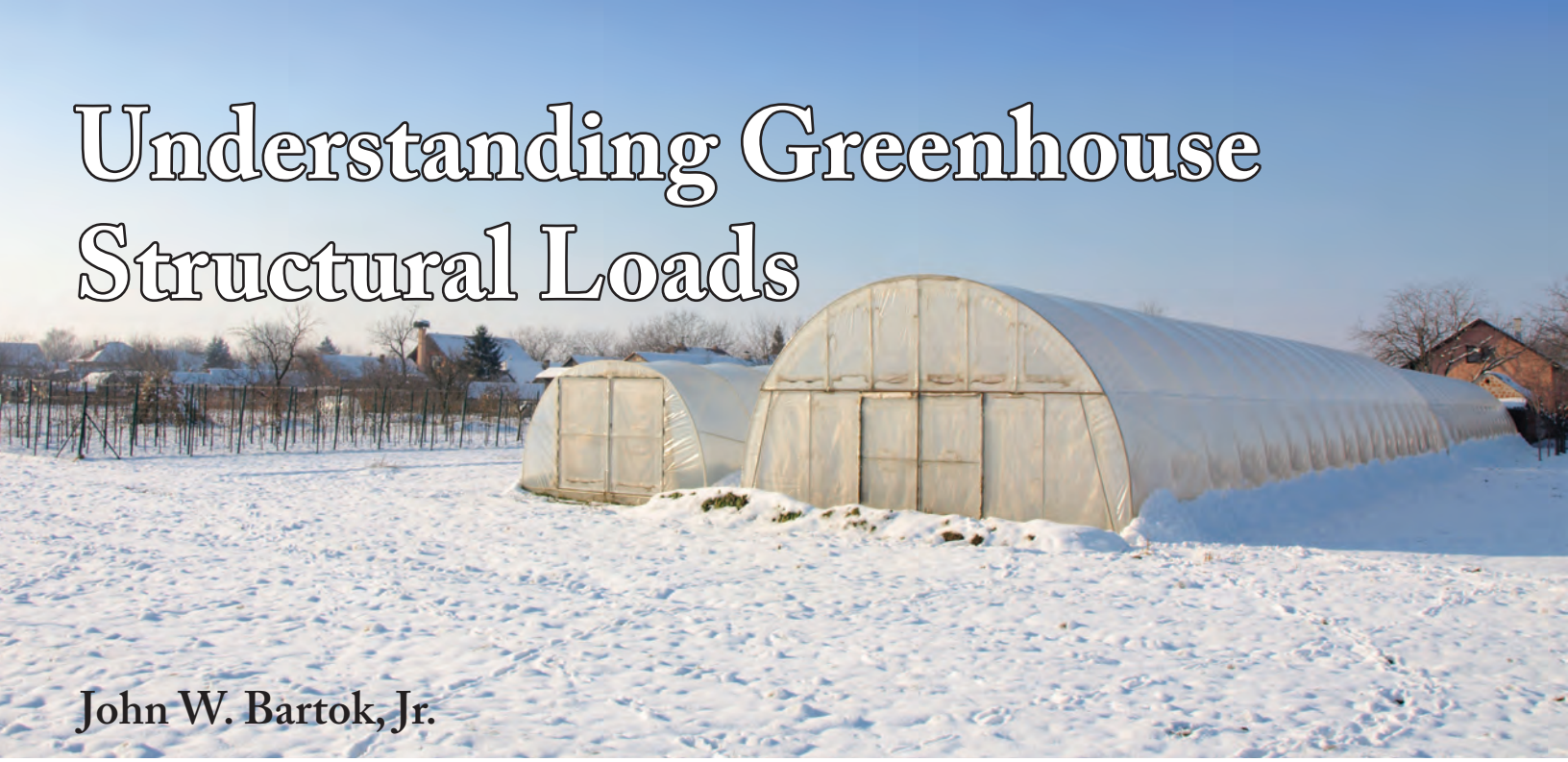
The stock flower piece is arranged on a stand of gilded or painted frame-work—former preferred—upholding baskets on its several arms, the baskets being supported on beds of moss varied with the feathery ferns of Africa. Cages of glided frame-work containing canaries are often hung from supports; and stuffed birds, little Poe's raven on the pallid bust of Pallas, top the topmost basket. Drawing-room *epergnes* of this description, standing seven feet high, have been erected this Winter at prices ranging from $500 to $1000. African ferns feather them in all directions, and pots of rare exotics seem to sink rooted in the baskets. The bridal decorations of the period is the canopy or *arc de triomphe* in floral exotics—extravaganzas just now reckoned very stylish—costing from $3000 to $5,000, exclusive of bouquets and baskets.

At balls of the *ton* floral decoration runs into still stranger extravaganzas. Cornices of depending roses margin the frescoed ceiling, which seems to be upheld at intervals by fantastic floral columns. Passion-vines and nasturtiums overrun the basket of gas-jets depending from the center; the bells of the latter swinging from the bronze frame-work. Staircase and hall are metamorphosed into a bewildering avenue of four-feet ferns and tall, Spanish-looking oleanders, varied with splendid camelia-trees; and exotic vines coil and crawl serpent-like along the hand-rail. Silver baskets of exotics swing in the dressing-room; windows are curtained with dense ranks of oleanders, and the whole is a Midsummer night's dream of gorgeous floral detail—in the phrase of papa, who foots the bill, for from $7,000 to $10,000, devilish expensive. Out of taste or in taste, it moots not, the Fifth-avenue palace is, for the nonce, a Mab's habitation or an Al Aaraaf, and when music thrills the weird interior, and its floral bells and wreaths stir to melody and swing in unison with the dancers—the spectrum or colors set to the gamut of sound—it is a palace of the King Beautiful—"Whose heart-beat moves the pinions of every beautiful thing, With a music well befitting the glory of so high a King."

So there may be an identity in fashion after all; and money is a minister of the beautiful, though the taste of Mr. Mammon is not always of the highest order.

If you've been growing flowers as long as this guy—or just feel that you have—save March 12-13, 2018 on your calendar. Plan to attend the ASCFG's first event organized for veteran growers in New Orleans, with sessions on business succession, retirement planning, and many more. Details available later this year.

Understanding Greenhouse Structural Loads



John W. Bartok, Jr.

With the hurricanes along the East Coast and in the Northwest this past fall, and the prediction of heavy snow in some areas this past winter, growers frequently question the load that their greenhouses will withstand.

All buildings, including greenhouses, headhouses, and storage buildings are affected by external and internal loads. These loads are transferred through the frame members and foundation to the ground. Loads are commonly classified as dead loads, live loads, wind loads, and in some locations, earthquake loads.

Dead Loads

Dead loads are gravity loads that are constant in magnitude throughout the life of the building. They include the walls, roof, glazing, and fixed equipment. Fans, suspended heaters, and overhead piping for water or heat are also considered a dead load, as they are permanently attached to the structure. Long-term crops, such as tomatoes or cucumbers that are suspended from the trusses, are frequently indentified as a dead load. Short-term crops, such as hanging baskets, are normally considered a live load.

Values for wind uplift must not exceed the dead load of the structure, otherwise the structure could be lifted out of the ground. This can occur occasionally to hoophouses that have the pipes driven only 18 to 24 inches into the soil. These structures weigh very little, and the hoop shape acts like an airplane wing that tends to create uplift when the wind passes over it.

Live Loads

Live loads are more difficult to calculate, as they can change. One common live load is a maintenance crew repairing glazing on the roof. Another is a trolley conveyor that moves plants into the greenhouse. The carrier full of plants weighs 200 to 300 pounds. This is a concentrated load that moves as the conveyor is pushed along. The National Greenhouse Manufacturers Association (NGMA) designs guidelines recommend that purlins, rafters, and trusses be designed to support a minimum concentrated load of 100 pounds at midspan.

Short-term plant loads are considered live loads. NGMA recommends that these be limited to a maximum of 15 pounds/square foot (psf). A crop of 10-inch hanging baskets could add from 3 to 5 psf.

Wind Loads

Loading from the wind can come from any direction, but is usually considered to act in a horizontal direction against the walls. Basic wind speeds for design are 90 miles/hour (mph) for most of the U.S., except the West Coast, which uses 86 mph, and the east and southern coasts where hurricanes are common. There, loads vary from 90 to 150 mph, depending on the distance from the coastline.

The basic wind speed is adjusted for factors such as site exposure; height and shape of the building; roof slope; and use factor. Greenhouses and sales buildings open to the public have a higher use factor than a production greenhouse. The above factors are applied to the wind velocity to get a wind load. Structural member size and resistance to overturning are then calculated.

During heavy wind conditions, doors and vents should be closed to reduce the double effect of external wind pressure and the force of the wind that gets in through the openings.

Snow Loads

Snow loads vary considerably from 0 along the southern coast of the U.S. to more than 100 psf in northern Maine and in some of the higher mountain areas. Local building codes specific the design snow load.

Snow can be light and fluffy with a water equivalent of 12 inches equal to 1 inch of rain. It can also be wet and heavy with 3 to 4 inches equal to the weight of 1 inch of rain. Snow having a 1-inch rainwater equivalent will load a structure with 5.2 psf. This amounts to about 6.5 tons on a 25 x 96-foot greenhouse.

Design snow loads are usually adjusted to consider building exposure, roof slope, heat loss through the roof, and the type of occupancy. As the heat loss through the glazing on a greenhouse is high, the design usually considers that most of the snow will melt or slide off.

Drifting snow causes unbalanced loads that may collapse greenhouses. Two to four times normal loads may occur where sliding snow or drifts build up. This is especially true in ranges of several hoophouses where they are placed side by side. It can also occur on the leeward bays of a gutter-connected range. A space of at least 10 feet should be left between freestanding greenhouses to provide space for the snow that slides off. If there is not adequate space, sidewalls may be crushed in.

Other Considerations

In practice, combinations of loads are used, as several types of loading may occur at the same time. For example, there may be a high wind associated with a snowstorm.

In some areas of the country, earthquake loads may have to be considered. Production greenhouses are usually exempt, as they have limited human occupancy.

Today, most manufacturers provide a structural analysis for their greenhouses. This may be required to obtain a building permit, and insures that the greenhouse will handle the forces of nature without problems.

Diagonal bracing should be included in all greenhouses to prevent racking of the frame.

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John Bartok, Jr. is an agricultural engineer, an emeritus extension professor at the University of Connecticut, and a regular contributor to Greenhouse Management.

Outreach Education: Universities Adapt to a Changing Landscape and New Audience

By Peter Konjoian and Raymond Cloyd

Reprinted with permission from Greenhouse Product News *in which lead author Peter Konjoian partners with a fellow industry leader every other month to deliver insights in a conversation-style piece.*

State Extension programs have changed dramatically over the years.
How can growers adapt and continue to solve production problems in the future?

Consider this scenario: April has arrived and another bedding plant season is days away. Anticipation is high as consumers are eager to start buying flowers and vegetables. Earlier in the week, you noticed some distorted new growth on a crop of zonal geraniums that is two weeks from flowering. Panic strikes. In desperation you contact your university-based Extension specialist and ask if he/she can visit your greenhouse later in the morning to diagnose the problem.

Wait (screeching cartoon tires): What?

I (Peter) apologize, my mind wandered back to how my father dealt with his crop problems. I cannot remember the last time my state Extension specialist visited my greenhouse.

Peter: Raymond, shed some light on this subject. The fact that Extension has changed dramatically is a hot button issue. Reviewing the reasons for the dramatic change and describing how we can adapt will help both established greenhouse growers and new growers understand how crop problems can be solved in the future.

Raymond: Peter, one of the main issues regarding Extension is the fact there are fewer university-based Extension specialists with horticultural crop responsibilities. In addition, university-based specialists who are members of a department faculty typically have split (two-way) appointments, which usually include Extension along with research. So, they have to spend more time at the university writing grants and publishing papers to placate the research portion of their appointment, which results in less time to visit growers. Therefore, greenhouse growers are not able to have the face-to-face discussions/interactions they were used to previously when Extension specialists had 100 percent Extension appointments. As such, there may be a disconnect between the university and greenhouse growers leading to greenhouse growers not relying on specialists for information regarding plant protection but instead using industry technical representatives.

Peter: Thanks for the insight, Raymond. It leads me to wonder if the title "Extension specialist" has become outdated. The traditional specialist has morphed into a "jack-of-two-trades"—Extension and research. What about the possibility that Extension faculty may be responsible for teaching as well? Being tethered to campus with weekly class lectures, labs, and student office hours creates a travel dilemma as well.

Raymond: Yes, it is possible that Extension faculty may have a split-appointment that includes teaching. In addition, they may have three-way appointments (extension, research, and teaching), which may make it difficult to develop quality Extension programs.

Peter: Your description of a three-way academic appointment is important for growers to understand when questioning why their specialists cannot justify greenhouse visits. While it has been fairly common for campus based "non-Extension specialist" faculty to have three-way appointments of teaching, research and Extension, the Extension component was the smallest and simply meant that the faculty member would have some contact with the growers in the state.

It is the other side of this coin that presents a challenge; where the specialist whose main responsibility is to serve the growers has been tasked with research and teaching responsibilities. Logic states that something had to give, and it was one-on-one grower visits that university deans directed specialists to jettison.

Framing the old Extension model further allows us to explore changes needed in the future. Under our traditional Extension system each land grant university had a full complement of specialists, which often included a horticultural crop specialist, entomologist, and plant pathologist. Each state had a growers' association and each growers' association published a newsletter, organized educational meetings, and coordinated grower tours. The Extension specialists often worked hand-in-hand with the growers' association.

Their combined efforts ensured that university research was shared with growers at these meetings.

Several state associations ascended to national prominence, most continued to function at the state level, and others gradually dissolved. The Ohio Florists' Association (OFA) and Bedding Plants International (BPI) were perhaps the most visible as both the Short Course and BPI Conference became reliable conduits for researchers and Extension specialists to share information with greenhouse growers nationally.

Regional conferences focus or did focus on issues specific to geographical areas. Included are the New England Greenhouse Conference (now Northeast), the Southeast Greenhouse Conference (now disbanded) and the Farwest Show. You and I and many of our colleagues have spoken at these venues and appreciate how they complement the national conferences.

As the model evolves, two concepts are infiltrating our university and cooperative Extension institutions. One is integration of electronic communication platforms and the other is adoption of multi-university collaborations. Raymond, how are these concepts shaping the future of Extension?

Raymond: Peter, your question is related to an issue associated with the production of fewer university Extension publications although there are many sources of information that greenhouse growers can obtain and download from numerous websites. Still, there may be fewer university-based Extension publications available due to having fewer Extension specialists. However, there are many electronic-based information sources available affiliated with webinars, podcasts, and videos. In addition, there are online courses. For example, Heidi Wollaeger Lindberg (Michigan State University Extension) and I developed an online course on "Biological Controls for Greenhouse Growers."

Peter: It sounds like both concepts have already become standard practice for you and your Extension colleagues. As we harness advanced communication platforms we can eliminate a lot of duplicated effort in terms of every state and its growers' association needing to be its own epicenter of information. I'm encouraged that an earlier era of competition between Extension programs, growers' associations, and conferences is evolving into a more collaborative environment that is making efficient use of dwindling federal and state funding. Have you found other means to be effective in providing education to growers?

Raymond: Yes, we have found that workshops, including those on diagnostics and biological control, are valuable in providing both technical and hands-on information to greenhouse growers. There needs to be more interaction between Extension specialists and participants instead of just PowerPoint presentations. The "old model" of having a conference with just academic or industry experts speaking may no longer be the most efficient way of transmitting information. Peter, I also wonder how effective "our" educational programs are when attendees are spending time on their electronics (e.g., cell phone, iPhones, iPads, and laptops) as opposed to listening to the speaker.

Peter: I don't have an answer for that one, Raymond. Perhaps our colleagues who are teaching undergraduate students, our future growers, can tell us how they are adapting their teaching style to our first generation of handheld-device learners. I will, however, go on record as stating that success regarding hands-on workshops is not necessarily measured by attendee count. The intimate interaction you reference is possible only with groups smaller than our traditional PowerPoint presentation sessions. We need to avoid the pitfall of bowing to numbers when evaluating hands-on education. Continuing, how do you see the academic and private sector collaboration evolving to serve our growers?

Raymond: Peter, I think that the university-based academics with Extension and research appointments will have to collaborate with the private sector to sustain existing programs by developing practical or applied short- and long-term research projects, and Extension sources of information.

Peter: On another front, we are witnessing a movement where greenhouse growers are shifting a portion of their production from ornamental crops to edible crops, mainly vegetables and herbs, to participate in the locally-grown food movement. For many greenhouse growers including myself this brings us back to our early careers as farmers.

As industrial agriculture grew during the last century many of us built greenhouses and switched to ornamental crops as vegetable margins declined. Ironically, we have now come full circle where ornamental crop margins have eroded and are returning to our farming roots but this time in the more controlled environment of a greenhouse. Some of today's young growers are entering our industry with the responsibility of producing both categories simultaneously without the experiences the rest of us had. While most production practices are similar when growing floriculture or vegetable crops, how does this situation influence Extension?

Raymond: One of the issues associated with growers producing both ornamental and edible crops (vegetables and herbs) simultaneously in the greenhouse is that insecticides and miticides may not be registered for use on both cropping systems. Therefore, we recommend that greenhouse growers have separate growing areas within the greenhouse for ornamentals and edible crops to minimize spray drift problems.

Peter: A final comment, Raymond, as we conclude. Growers often find themselves in situations that relate to our discussion of university Extension specialists taking on research and teaching responsibilities. Many growers also undertake a wide range of tasks requiring them to wear many hats around their ranges.

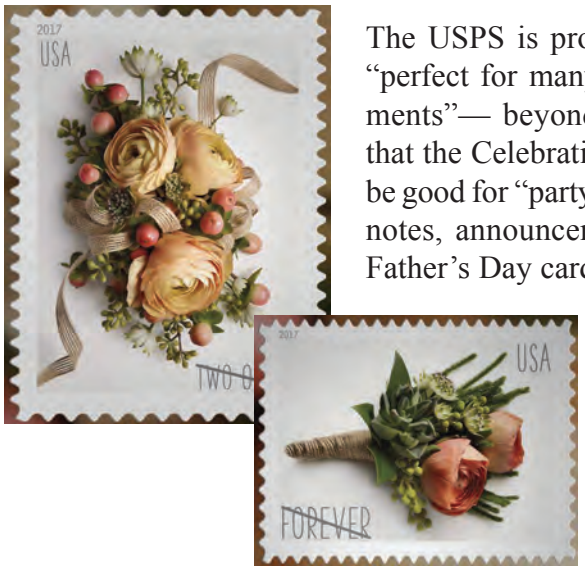
Of particular relevance to this conversation is when greenhouse expansion occurs, particularly for small to medium-sized operations. We are often the ones doing the actual building. Carpenter, plumber, electrician, welder, you name it and we become that tradesperson. Speaking from experience, whenever we built a new greenhouse to expand the family business my attention to crop production suffered. Most growers understand what their university faculty are going through. Reciprocally, most of our faculty appreciate that running a greenhouse requires a split appointment too.

Raymond, thank you for your insights. The two of us invite our colleagues and fellow growers to continue the discussion.

Peter Konjoian is president of Konjoian's Floriculture Education Services, Inc. His career spans four decades as a commercial grower, research and consultant. Raymond Cloyd is professor and Extension specialist in horticultural entomology/plant protection at Kansas State University. Konjoian can be reached at peterkfres@comcast.net.

Floral Postage Stamps with a Personal Touch

The U.S. Postal Service recently unveiled its Celebration Boutonniere and Celebration Corsage Forever Stamps, which were designed by Carol Caggiano, AIFD, PFCI. Carol, with her late husband Neil, has been a long-time supporter of the ASCFG.



The USPS is promoting the stamps as "perfect for many of life's special moments"— beyond weddings — noting that the Celebration Boutonniere would be good for "party invitations, thank-you notes, announcements, birthday cards, Father's Day cards, and other occasions" with the Celebration Corsage fitting for heavy "invitations for birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, and other celebrations; oversize greeting cards for all occasions; and mailings such as small gifts that require extra postage."

The floral designs featured in the Celebration Boutonniere and Celebration Corsage Forever Stamps include ranunculus, with floral accents of succulents, Astrantia, Berzelia, and clubmoss greenery.

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Carolyn Snell
Carolyn Snell Designs
carolyn@snellfamilyfarm.com

Floral Improv Boosts Our Spirits

Greetings from Maine and a soggy spring! We're planting up a storm at this point, and our early spring crops in the tunnels are producing well. It's always a challenge this time of year to stay on schedule with planting production while also harvesting, designing, and marketing. The stress of juggling all those facets combined with nearly daily rain events, and me falling woefully behind on client correspondence was really bringing me down. I was feeling burnt out and uninspired.

On my farm I often do most of the design work, and my team creates solid bunches and mixed bouquets for market, and occasionally helps replicate my designs for event work. Our bouquets for farmers' markets are medium, and usually in the $8 to $20 price points. Our market is very competitive and there are bouquets that are much less expensive than ours, so we've been hovering at those levels for years.

Often around Mother's Day I make a few fancier vases to inspire orders for bigger arrangements, and some extras to take to market on speculation. Last fall when I met with my harvest manager to debrief the season and plan for 2017, she told me she was interested in learning more design. Also, our spring bulbs were more productive than ever and we had more flowers than we could sell as straight bunches.

When we prepare our flowers for market we lay out our harvest on the tables, and the team bunches according to my "Hopes and Dreams" list. This is our volume goals based on sales that week in previous years, sales in previous weeks, and the weather report for the farmers' market. This spring we've started a new tradition of a quick "Jam Session." After we fulfill the Hopes and Dreams list, each of us on the team makes a vase out of whatever is inspiring us. We get to practice color combinations or show off that one really curvy poppy stem or a perfect branch or whatever we have that moves us. I guess that's what feels so exciting to me: flowers are moving us.

We started this project to hone our design skills and empower each other to feel more comfortable working with our products, but here's the thing: the arrangements have been selling. They are a bargain at $30 for the flowers, banded on site, or $40 to $50 including the vase, but I feel like we're planting the seed of our customers valuing creative combinations more and more. Some customers are on their way to give the flowers as a gift and love the stand-alone nature of those arrangements, compared to a bouquet that will need fussing when they present it. Our displays are looking more enticing, too.

In mid-May I felt like my anemones and poppies were galloping so fast that I was moving into a glut. I posted an invitation on Instagram for folks to join me in a "Floral Jam Session." I mostly just wanted to have some unstructured fun with flowers in the studio and sell some of these stems, so I priced the workshop at $50 and gathered some vases I was looking to cull from my collection. I gathered some textures from the fields and pulled out the magical spring blooms. Four people came to the first Jam Session, but many were interested and say they want to come to the next one. I didn't get rich on that one, but I do think I cashed in on some of my overflow, and it was an easy workshop to prep for. My intention was for this to be fun for someone at any experience level, but all four people who showed up were floral professionals. They loved the product they were working with and many will order from me for their events. One of them bought a bucket of flowers from my cooler to take back to her shop. Another took photos of which colors of

tulips and ranunculus she wanted for her order two weeks later. I think open studios are a good way to connect with event designers in our area to show them some of our product they are not used to working with, especially greens. This helps them think of me and my flowers when they need something extra special.

Neither of these ideas are new ideas, of course, but spring production is feeling a bit more gratifying this year because we have built some fun into our market prep routine, and people seem to be appreciating our whimsy. We have to do all we can to keep things fun, especially when it rains so much.

I hope you all are staying afloat!

MID-ATLANTIC

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia

Lisa Ziegler
The Gardener's Workshop
lisa@shoptgw.com

Ahhh, deep in the throes of the farming season. I am writing this in June and as usual, it feels like this is the busiest time of year. However, I am realizing that I feel this way pretty much all the time these days. In normal farmer style, I overcommit myself and when I do try to give myself a moment to spare, something seems to pop up and snatch those moments away.

What this has led to this year is actually making me crazy. I have become a serious offender of the very principles that have kept me steady all these years: I've become a chaser this season. What is a chaser? A chaser is a state of mind and habit that happens on my farm, maybe yours too. It's when instead of riding the wave, I'm chasing it—and it feels as though I will never catch it.

When I am chasing I spend too much time doing chores that really shouldn't have to be done at all. These chasing chores are a result of me not doing another chore on time, or at all. This year I am chasing because of weather and my schedule. In place of focusing my energy on preventing problems and other good things (riding the wave), I am running around like a fire extinguisher putting out the fires that are growing like crazy (chasing the wave.)

A great example of this is what I spent today doing—managing the pathways of one the gardens. Normally our beds and pathways are finished before even one plant is planted. This means that the beds are covered in biodegradable film and the pathways are either mulched with leaf litter, covered with landscape cloth, or tilled flat for easier weekly mowing before we begin planting. We plan to have this process completed a week or two before planting begins. This lends itself to a practically maintenance-free growing season as well as other benefits. This did not happen with our first tender annual planting this year.

The chasing chore I did today was to regain weed-free pathways so that the leaf litter can be put down this evening—the leaf litter that should have been put down weeks ago. This hard work would have never been needed if the leaf litter had gone down on time. It's one of those "I'd kick myself if I could" moments.

My way of attempting to regain control and stop chasing? First and foremost is to do triage and eliminate some things to create more time and fewer chores. Sometimes this may mean dumping a section of plants that are on their way to getting overgrown anyway—ditch them and get ahead. Feed them to the compost pile. I have done this more than once. Call in help. I have a landscape guy that needed some side work who is now coming in the evening and spreading mulch and pounding stakes. I am heading to being back on top of things.

The moral of the story is when the wave starts crashing, you've already missed the ride. Cut your losses, ditch something, and get ahead of the next wave, because riding it is more profitable, rewarding, and just smarter.

SOUTHEAST

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee

Val Schirmer
Three Toads Farm
vschirmer3@gmail.com

ASCFG members open a wholesale flower market in North Carolina. Could this be right for you?

Hi everyone! I hope you saw Judy's Facebook post on May 25 about Piedmont Wholesale Flowers, a new growers' cooperative market that some of our fellow members just opened in Durham, North Carolina. The market launched in March with the help of a $10,000 grant from the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), a Pittsboro, N.C.-based organization that provides local farmers better access to tools that encourage sustainability.

Growers' cooperatives aren't unusual for vegetable and fruit growers, even sheep farmers, but after a Google search, it seems we can probably count on one hand the number of existing *floral* growers' cooperatives.

If you're like me, you probably started wondering whether something like this might work in other markets, too. So, I decided to call Kelly Morrison, who owns Color Fields Farm just outside of Durham, to ask her more about what it takes to start a market like this and get her thoughts on how it might work in other places (and, yes, it can!).

Kelly, tell us a little about your flower farming background and where you sell.

This is just my fourth year as a grower with my own farm, and I still grow flowers along with a few vegetables. I've been doing some select weddings, selling at our local farmers' market, and driving around selling to florists. I'm in what's called the Triangle area, which is Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill. There are no wholesalers in Durham or Chapel Hill, and one large local wholesaler with a warehouse and a couple of smaller pre-order wholesalers in Raleigh. It's a pretty small market and all of us growers know each other; some of us sold at different farmers' markets, and some at the same market. Most florists and event designers in the Triangle have their flowers shipped in. So, options to sell more flowers are limited.

And that led you to the idea to start a wholesale flower market?

Yes. I'd heard about the Seattle Wholesale Growers Market, and got together with Jillian and Katy (fellow growers Jillian Mickens of Open Door Farm and Katy Thelen of Happy as a Coneflower Farm) and we tried to do something like what Fair Field Flowers has been doing in Wisconsin. We tried it for one season but it was just too hard to get our flowers together—all our farms were in different places. I started thinking and talking more about the Seattle market and decided to hold a meeting last August with some other local growers and a few florists who buy a lot of local flowers, to see if there might be enough interest.

And how did that go?

It was a really good meeting and there was a lot of interest in the idea! But it was still the midst of the growing season so we decided to table the idea and revisit it after frost when things slowed down. When we talked about it again, and everyone was still excited about the idea, we knew we wanted to do it.

We identified Durham as a good food hub and we thought would be the perfect place to have our flower market, too. As it turned out, we found a location inside the Bull City Cool Food hub and rented space inside a climate-controlled warehouse (with access to coolers) immediately, before we had anything else figured out.

First market day in March at Piedmont Wholesale Flowers! From left: Kelly Morrison, Color Fields; Katy Thelen, Happy as a Coneflower Farm; Jillian Mickens, Open Door Farm; Adam Sherwood, Mighty Tendril Farm; and Leah Cook, Wild Hare Farm—ALL ASCFG members! (photo: Allison Donnelly)

Beautiful locally-grown flowers greet florists and event planners (photo: Allison Donnelly)

How did getting the grant fit in?

Honestly, we would have made it happen without the grant, but it sure does help. RAFI was another local group and they give grants to farmers, primarily in the Carolinas. For a collaborative grant, we could apply for up to $10,000, which meant we could hire a market manager. We found out we received the grant last winter, right before opening the market in mid-March, so things happened really, really quickly.

How does the market run?

The market is open just one day a week, on Thursday, from 8 to 10 a.m. Each of the growers sends in what they'll have for the market in advance to Allison Donnelly, our market manager, and she sends it out to our email list. As of June 1, we're averaging about six to eight active farmers. We charge each vendor $20 a week to sell there. We didn't want to have any barriers to participation and because of the grant we could keep the fees modest. Customers must be registered in advance, and they pay each farmer as they come through, which can be a bit cumbersome but it works for now. And we've filed the paperwork to be a legal growers' cooperative. We have all the basics done and are now looking at how to make it financially sustainable for next year.

How has the response been so far?

We've had a GREAT reception from the local florist community—a lot of them have never bought local flowers before! More people with flower shops are coming, beyond the event florists, because it's a lot more convenient to have all the growers with their fresh and beautiful product all in one space. That's why we wanted to have the farmers there each week—at least this first year—selling the flowers. Developing that personal connection between growers and florists and event planners has been great. This is REALLY helping the newer farmers scale up and it's helped us spread awareness about how superior locally-grown flowers are.

Did you have to do much advertising to get started?

No! It's honestly been almost all Instagram! We didn't do any advertising *per se*. Everyone emailed all their accounts and contacts and then hit Instagram to spread the word. The web site was up first and we ask everyone how they heard about us. Social media has been amazing.

What have been some of your biggest hurdles?

Logistics around pre-orders has been complicated and we're trying to figure out a pre-order system, or perhaps the ASCFG's Shopify system. Pricing has been tricky. Everyone had the quality we needed, so that wasn't an issue, but there's quite a bit of variability between prices. On the other hand, we had two growers with peonies and they were priced the same. Our next step will

Bull City Cool is the food hub where Piedmont Wholesale Flowers rents its space. (photo: Allison Donnelly)

The difference between shipped and locally-grown becomes obvious at Piedmont Wholesale flowers. (photo: Allison Donnelly)

be consolidating sales. The co-op will sell for the farmers, like the Seattle market does. I anticipate prices will go up then, and there's definitely room for that in everyone's pricing.

Do you think it's an idea that can work in other markets or cities? Are there size limitations?

Yes, I think it can definitely work in other cities and I don't really think a market can be too small. The biggest obstacle is having a great location and enough farmers. After all, people are getting married everywhere and there's a lot of money spent on flowers. Florists like being able to come to ONE place; it's a lot less overwhelming for them too. Food hubs are great partners and they're popping up all over. People who deal with local food just seem to "get it". The food hub here is almost like a business incubator. A lot of smaller businesses are using the space.

What advice do you have for others?

I have to admit, it's been hard to find time to get everything going—on top of running our businesses—but it's so worth it! My advice is to definitely get as many partners as possible in the beginning. Reach out to florists who are already buying and other farmers, and divvy up the work. For example, a florist did our website and logo.

What will success for Piedmont Wholesale Flowers look like?

Right now, I feel it is already successful, and that's great. We flew by the seat of our pants and made it happen. Longer term, being completely financially self-supporting—so we're not looking for grants—is the ideal. We need money to pay our employees, pay for our space. We're already getting feedback that people want more hours to be able to buy from us. As numbers grow, we'll be able to add another morning or two. We're not going to go year-round, just through frost. We might try to do a pop-up market for, say, Valentine's Day, in the future.

And what about you, Kelly? What is it that you can do now, that you couldn't before?

I'm selling a LOT more flowers!! I'm able to sell to a LOT more people in a much smaller amount of time. In just one morning I can sell to 10-20 florists without driving around. Other than selling during the week to one florist who buys a lot of local flowers, I'm not driving around selling flowers anymore. I know I can grow even more flowers—and I know I can SELL more flowers—than I ever have before.

Want for find out more?

Website: www.piedmontwholesaleflowers.com
Instagram: /piedmontwholesaleflowers
Facebook: /piedmontwholesaleflowers

NORTH AND CENTRAL

Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming

Mimo Davis Duschack
Urban Buds City Grown Flowers
citygrownflowers@gmail.com

In the Region: Summer tends to be a slower time for regional activities, but we did see a flux of members coming for visits in April and May. It's always good to have visitors and to visit other growers. Really looking forward to the ASCFG fall meeting in Columbus, Ohio. Steve and Gretel Adams, owners of Sunny Meadow Flower Farm, and their crew are an amazing flower force. This meeting is not one to miss!

On the Farm: After five years of working a demanding fulltime off-farm job I came home to the farm in April. The transition to farming fulltime has been anything but easy! The first two years Miranda and I worked the farm with every free moment we had. As our sales base grew we took on a volunteer who quickly because our first employee. We paid him out of our own off-farm income for a while until the farm could support him. The schedule was absolutely brutal! I would work the farm in the mornings from 5:30 to 7:00, going over the day's assignments (that I would've love to be doing myself; for a time I was quite jealous that he was taking my money and getting to do the fun jobs!), and off to work I would go. In the evening we would work from 6:00 until it was so dark we could no longer see what we were doing. We occasionally broke out the floodlights to finish whatever task we felt was urgent, and of course everything was urgent! We did that for 5 years. Our goal was to build a customer base that would demand that I work the farm full time; our timetable for this was five years.

If you're a new grower thumbing through Instagram wondering why everyone has these amazing fields and you have a weed plot, remember social media platforms are where everyone puts their best foot forward! Crop failures and overgrown, dead plugs in a flat don't make that cut, but believe me they exist even with the old-timers.

Five years is a really short time to build anything! We did have some advantages working in our favor. First, we did have a small, ready-made client base with our florists (5-7) from my previous flower farming days. The florists were thrilled to have local flowers back.

Second, we both came to our farm with substantial farming experiences. Both of us had run farms before and were well aware of "some" of the time and labor we would have to commit for our ambitious goal.

Then the farm itself came with a good amount infrastructure: a glass greenhouse, studio space, and a cooler space; even in horrific condition, it was not beyond repair. This allowed us to jump feet first into season extension with our earlier spring crops.

We worked seven days a week, missed some family events, and lost some friends. Our bodies ached, and our parents worried about us. No matter how hard we worked, we were never caught up or as on top of things as we wanted to be. Our postage stamp farm had weeds, a ton of them! Some dreams died in the flat and others were gourmet meals for the insects. Our florists purchased what flowers made it to them.

The first year at our farmers' market we would say every week, "If we don't make $300 we are not going back." In that first year we would come home, count the cash box, and it was always $299! We knew our lives were not sustainable, but at the end of each year our accountant told us that our numbers were moving in the right direction. So we pushed forward toward our goal.

As I look back now on all we have done I'm clueless on how we got through it all but for the love of farming and the flowers. Someone once told me "If it was easy, everyone would be doing it!" Somehow that stuck with me. We have built and created Urban Buds: City Grown Flowers to the point where I had to be here full time for us to continue to meet our demand.

What is different today from five years ago? Not much, and a whole lot! We still have weeds, but we have a larger client base and are serving 12-15 florists weekly. We have the opposite problem of not enough to meet the demand between florists and farmers' markets. We have seen our florist sales significantly increase with the addition of the ASCFG Shopify program. Instead of driving a truck around hoping someone buys, we now cut flowers already sold. It also demonstrates to our customers that we are gearing up our business to help them buy more from us, and they are!

We still have some dreams die in the flat but not as many; it's more like a flat was overlooked in the watering.

One of our goals was to take a day off of outdoor chores and have a scheduled office day. I used to really admire the "old timers" who use to tell me "Sunday is the Lord's day!" or "Sunday is a day of rest!" So now we have "Sunday Family Fun Day!" Chores are done in the morning and finished by noon. The rest of the day is planned activities for our family. I found out just how amazingly invigorating the farm can be after even a few hours of away time!

Speaking of getting away, we have always had a winter vacation. We are beach people, so 2-3 weeks in our down time is almost perfect.

I realize in our farming practice that I'm always going to be "behind"; it's the nature of the beast. It's always too wet, too dry, too cold, too hot! For the most part I have stopped that anxious, non-productive, freak-out knot in my stomach about how behind we are and replaced it with "What is the next thing to check off the list?" I'm working from a proactive place rather than a feeling of drowning. The proactive approach works so much better for me, especially when I was stressing at three in the morning.

Flower farming is much like a marathon: you have a course, you have your own pace, and you have mental and physical obstacles to overcome. Some folks decide it's not for them, but the success is in the showing up and trying. Others cross the finish line doing their personal best in their own time and terms.

If you're a new grower thumbing through Instagram wondering why everyone has these amazing fields and you have a weed plot, remember social media platforms are where everyone puts their best foot forward! Crop failures and overgrown, dead plugs in a flat don't make that cut, but believe me they exist even with the old-timers. Keep seeding! Get rid of your failures—they are psychologically debilitating to look at. Do the next thing on your list. Build your customer base, and grow what you love! The finish line is just around the corner.

SOUTH AND CENTRAL

Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana,New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah

Rita Anders
Cuts of Color
ritajanders@cvctx.com

I recently saw on Facebook a story of a farmer trying to sell his invention to the Sharks, which I think many of you know who I'm talking about. Most of the sharks were not interested in his water-saver idea because the farmer didn't have enough mark-up or a sales outlet, but one shark agreed to give the money he was asking for and work with him. This farmer was very humbled, and when asked why he doesn't sell his water savers for more, he responded "Because I'm selling to farmers." He was happy making a dollar on each because he was thinking of who he was selling to.

While this is very sweet and humble, he was never going to get rich, but he was happy with that. I related to that farmer because if I'm able to keep my production costs down and still make a profit by my sales point, I'm happy and fulfilled to a point from my sales to my customers.

The other day I was loading my car with wedding table bouquets, a square vase that I charge $50, for and thinking it takes me selling two buckets of wholesale bouquets to make that same $50. So you would think that is the route I would take with my flowers but that's not my choice. While weddings are good money makers, there is a trade-off with time spent on weekends which means that I'm not spending valuable time with my family and friends.

This past year my brother got his cancer back and it's a real eye-opener as to what I want to do with the rest of my life. I'm lucky to have a great family and plenty of grandchildren so even though the weddings are so profitable, is that what

I want? I just wanted to open my schedule up so when my 12-year-old grandson wants me to be at a school function or my granddaughter wants me to see her play softball I can manage to be there. Or if I need to go sit with my brother at the hospital so my sister-in-law can have a break, I can. If my entire week is so scheduled out, there is not enough wiggle room for anything extra that comes up.

I have had to make decisions about weddings so I decided to cut back to about half as I still love designing them and I like the money. I decided to take my calendar and mark out all weekends that I know I have things going on, blocked out July and August because it's just too hot in Texas, and holiday weekends, and now I have a wedding schedule I can live with. I don't do wedding shows and my only real advertisement is Facebook and word of mouth.

I picked up a venue this year through word of mouth where the venue provides the flowers. I don't have to deal with the brides. The venue owner just sends me a few inspirational pictures from the brides and I have the freedom to design away. This would be a great avenue to any of you wanting to expand your wedding accounts. There are so many new venues opening up everywhere and even if they don't offer this option they will be after you offer to be their preferred wedding flower provider.

I've also decided I want to do more growing. I've always liked growing and selling and pushing myself to do more but I'm flexible and willing to change. What worked in my earlier years doesn't necessarily fit now. My husband retired, something I don't know if I will ever be able to see myself doing, but I will slowly adapt myself and my business to fit our schedule instead of us working on the flower schedule.

I'm pretty much set in my ways and recently when I had to rebuild my crew, I wasn't prepared for what happened. I advertised on my personal Facebook page because in my town everyone pretty much knows everyone, and word of mouth that I needed help travels fast. I hired two people in a day and it wasn't what I wanted but it worked out perfectly. One is a 76-year-old woman who comes in just twice a week on bouquet day. She puts sleeves on the bouquets and straight bunches that we assemble, and also makes some of the smaller, simpler straight bunches. She also keeps everything counted and in order. When she called me about the job I was like "Oh dear, how am I going to tell this lady that she won't work out?" but boy, was I wrong. She loves coming in for about 8 hours a week and just loves working with flowers. She turned out to be such a blessing. The other gal worked out also because I just needed someone for a couple of months till the college summer helped started so she fit the slot perfectly. My daughter tells me "Mom, I don't know why you worry about help because it always works out for you." I tell her it's not worrying, it's called planning.

In my effort to grow more, I've added quite a few crops. In the fall I ordered a shipment of Colibri poppies from Henk Onings with Onings Holland. They were a hit in winter sales. I bumped my shipments up to three successive plantings this coming winter. We sell all the blooms in straight bunches as they are a high-demand flower with many of the designers, and don't normally put them in our bouquets. I tried just picking into water and putting heat to the cut edges and I didn't see much difference in vase life.

I've also added eucalyptus to my plantings this year. It used to always give me a headache from the smell but I'm trying again and so far I'm good with the aroma. I planted all of it in unheated greenhouses but have the capability of protecting from the cold. I ordered plugs for silverdrop and silver dollar eucalyptus. I planted some in the ground and some in crates. They all seem to be doing well and I plan on cutting soon for sales in straight bunches. Eucalyptus is a great wedding filler.

I also added another row of 'Erlicheer' daffodils that I sourced from Ednie, Dave Dowling. These beauties are a novelty flower and have a strong scent. I also added some daffodils from Our American Roots that I thought were unique. Varieties included 'Delnashaugh', 'Flower Parade', and 'Obdam'.

As I age it gets harder and harder to pick all the anemones and ranunculus so this year I decided to try a bunch of anemone in crates up on raised benches. I planted ten bulbs per crate and they did amazing for me and they were so easy to pick. I'm going to try it with my ranunculus as well next year

For our spring bouquets I needed some serious filler so I added forget-me-nots. I had four-foot tall plants that bloomed and bloomed for a couple of months and gave me some serious fluff for my bouquets.

This past year I added more 'Belonica' double lilies to my lily schedule. I brought a crate in one month earlier than the year before and added two successions for lilies later. I also added 'Thalia' and 'Natalia' which are other double lilies that Zabo has to offer. They all turned out amazing, and a large portion of them bloomed just in time for Mother's Day so that was super awesome. It felt so good having that something extra to offer at Mother's Day. My plan this year was to have a ton of flowers for Mother's Day and it just worked out beautifully. I turned in all my lily orders in April of 2016 to insure that I would get all the lilies I want and scheduled out to ship to me in two-week increments. I planted the lilies in a greenhouse that we were able to keep from freezing. Some were planted in crates on tables and others in crates on the ground. The ones on the ground grew so much taller and stronger than those on elevated tables. The ground-grown ones were so tall that I wanted to say "timber" every time I cut one because it felt like we were cutting trees down.

By the time you are reading this article we will be in the dog days of summer in Texas, zone 8B and hot as heck, and trying to get our work done in the morning hours and then retreat to the air conditioning. It's hard to come out and work even in the evenings because at 9:00 p.m. it can still be 95 degrees. We do manage to get watering and jobs in the shade done. Enjoy your summer and get ready for a busy fall.

WEST AND NORTHWEST

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington

Lennie Larkin
B-Side Farm
lennielarkin@gmail.com

Greetings from out west! We've got a pretty big region here, with many members I've never met who live hours and hours from me. I wanted to get in touch with this spread-out group and ask some open-ended questions to see what's going on out there in farmland. So I created a simple, ten-question survey through Survey Monkey and sent it out to all my members, asking for a quick turnaround of a week to get responses back.

It's of course the height of the season for many, not the best time to jump on email and answer a survey. Only about a third of the region was able to respond, so the questions geared at getting some quantitative data don't really have a big enough sample size. For example, it's interesting to see that the largest group that answered the survey has been farming for just 1-2 years (35% of respondents), but does this provide an accurate picture of West Coast growers, or is it just that newer growers have more time to answer my silly surveys? Likewise, 42% of respondents are growing on less than one acre. I'm thinking my results are skewed towards those newer to the business.

A quick note to those of you thinking "But doesn't the AS-CFG have all these data about its members?" Well, yes and no! We have the information you give us upon signing up, and the information you send in when you renew (if you in fact choose to answer the few questions asked on the renewal form). Our data are only as good as what you give us! In my mind, trying

to serve an ever-changing membership is all the more difficult when we don't know who you are. So, be on the lookout for more questionnaires in the future, and for my West and Northwest members, find my emails and jump on that survey if you can!

As for the meat of the survey, the more qualitative questions, I was able to get a great glimpse into what some of our members are dealing with on their farms this year. There are some salient themes as well as lots of highly specific tidbits.

When asked the open-ended: "What are a few things you've learned recently that have really helped you in your business? Could be small or large!" there seemed to be a major focus on systems, dialing in the market, and on labor.

- I defined better what works for me/our farm, and finding clients that match our flow rather than the other way around.
- What grows best on our land, get successions seeded.
- We're really setting up our systems now and making the time to get them right, and I'm diving into QuickBooks, which feels good to get more organized in our office.
- Restructuring pricing!
- Know your market and grow the flowers for that market.
- Diversification of markets, growing to scale, and succession. Managing labor.
- We can't do this alone! My partner and I finally hired help for two days a week, which has been life changing!
- Really needed to hire help! Now have my first employee.
- How to manage finances.
- Focusing on varieties that grow well in my microclimate, soil type with minimal pest and disease issues, and not trying to grow every trendy flower under the sun.
- To focus on what sells.

When asked about their biggest challenges this season, one theme jumped off the page:

- Need more labor!
- Time and labor in the short term.
- Labor shortage.
- Labor shortage.
- Labor. Always. Having enough product on a consistent basis.
- Labor to get it all done.
- Pickers, field workers.
- LABOR!
- Labor availability.

Many also mentioned weather (what a year!), time management, and questioning profitability.

When I asked the open-ended "What new systems, major crops, or developments are you trying on the farm this season?" I got some great feedback:

- Summer goal of organizing and trying to become more lean.
- Getting the timing down between crops. Matching my seeding schedule to a bloom schedule and documenting it on Shopify, for easier (customer) shopping and potentially to begin to ship flowers.
- Providing cutters with quotas.
- Point of sale improvements, adding UPC codes to product. Being better at postharvest treatments.
- I installed a high tunnel and it's been a huge help.
- We built a new propagation greenhouse and have the grant now to build another structure. We invested in dahlia tubers and we're experimenting with some no-till methods.
- Better trellising/ more horizontal netting, pinching sunflowers, new dahlia color palette.

Many mentions of expansion:

- More employees. Updated irrigation. More space.
- Ramping up production three times.
- Expansion to more acres.
- Doubling cooling space.
- More raised beds and additional hoophouses.

- And lots of new crops!
- Lisianthus, Kordes roses, native foliage.
- Plant more perennials.
- Trying out mums.
- Peonies.
- Mums.
- Baptisia , other perennials.
- Campanula/'Dash Pink' dianthus/Serenade asters.
- Perennials.

Thanks so much to all who responded. We have so much to learn from one another and I've got a hunch that some simple surveys might present a quick and easy way to share some tips. Until next time!

CANADA

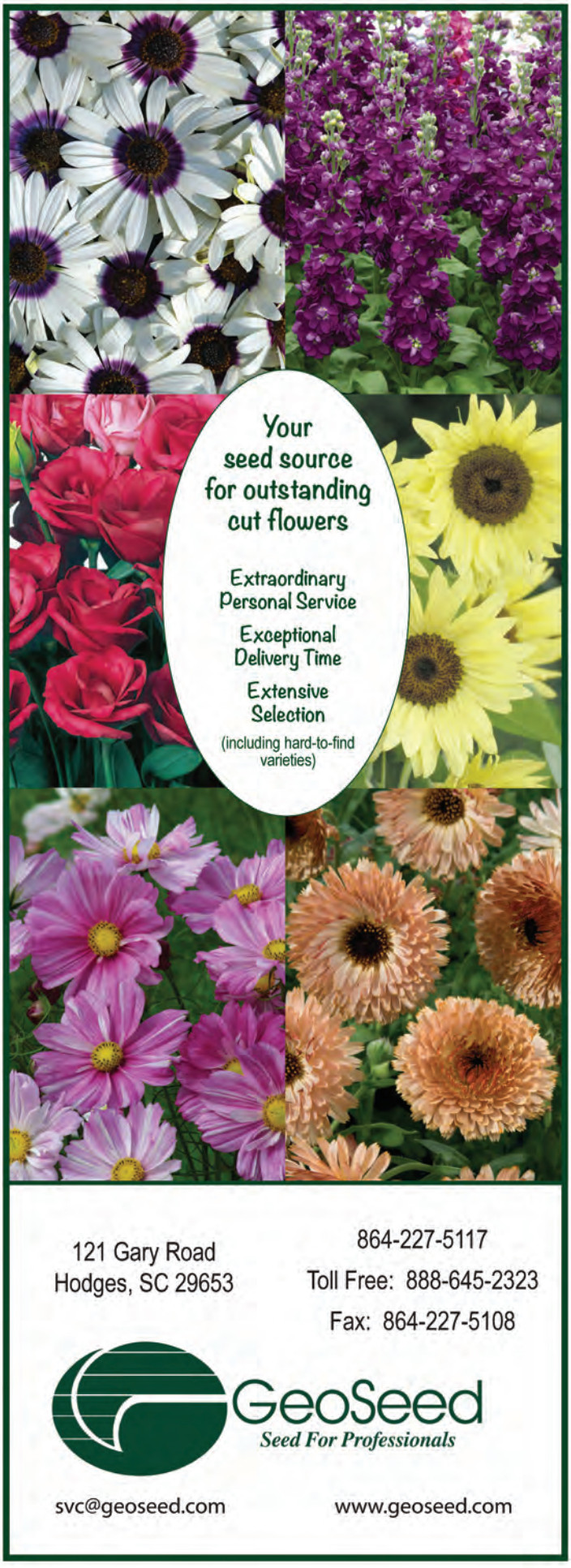
Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan

Janis Harris
Harris Flower Farm
janisandmarkharris@hotmail.com

You have bought your bulbs, tubers, shrubs, and seeds. Your planting schedule is entered into your calendar. Every article and post you can find about being a flower farmer has been read, re-read, printed and saved. You are ready to jump into your new life's calling. You are going to be a flower farmer! But where are you going to sell your flowers?

I think it is just as important to know your customer as it is to have the most desired varieties. Your sales outlets need to be on your planning board, too. Where are you going to sell the beautiful blooms you have worked so hard to grow?

There is a traditional sales outlet like the farmers' market. Being a farmers' market vendor is a lifestyle. You have to be okay with the early mornings every Saturday. There are also the



mid-week and evening markets but the same rule applies. You NEED to be there EVERY time the market is open. There also must be flowers available throughout the whole season. Market vendors concentrate their abundance for each market opening. It can be very rewarding. If you are lucky enough to have a busy morning market you can make $600-1000 in 4-5 hours, pack up, and still have the afternoon to spend with the family. The flip side of markets is that you can't go away during the market season.

Markets are also very weather dependent. If you have a trailer full of flowers and it's a cold, rainy morning, chances are you won't sell out like you would if it was a beautiful, sunny day. Some markets have permanent buildings or structures and some are in open air, or you have to bring your own tent. Markets are a great way to meet people and get the word out about your farm.

We have been doing farmers' markets for nine years. Our children have grown up at the market. We tease my oldest son that he has been at the market every Saturday except the Saturday he was born. Our customers know our family. They are excited to see how much the kids have grown over the winter. We are sad that we have decided that this will be the first year that our kids will not spend all morning with us at the market. At ages 7, 4, and 2 they are a little too busy for us while we are helping customers. They will still come and help us set up—it is a tradition for them and they love it—then they will go home and a neighbor will come and watch them. It seems funny to think that they were easier when they were babies. In a couple years they will come again. Who knows, someday they may be doing the market on their own?

If you are close to an urban center or on a busy road you could consider putting a flower stand or cart at the end of your lane. This can be a great way to sell flowers to people who may not normally go to a market. It may be an impulse buy. You want the cart or stand to catch people's eyes. Make sure the flowers are colourful and bright so they are seen. The negative of this is unfortunately some flowers may leave without leaving money. You have to be prepared for this. Hopefully it doesn't happen often but it probably will. Also make sure your money box is secure; you don't need the whole box growing legs. A farm lane stand needs to be checked on often and refilled as needed. This option is best if you are going to be around the farm the majority of the time.

Direct florists sales can be a great model for you to sell your flowers. Once you have met and formed a relationship with a florist in your area you can call on them and let them know what you have available each week. Sometimes it may take a few instances of introducing yourself and taking in samples of your flowers. It's a change in mindset for them. They may not be familiar with non-traditional flowers. You may have to educate them on what you can offer them. They may be used to ordering something months ahead and it just magically appears from whatever corner of the world on their specified date. The truly hardcore traditional florists may be hard to break into. You need to find someone who is open to being introduced to the wonderful world of locally-grown flowers.

Flower CSA and bouquet subscriptions are a great way to use flowers throughout the week. You also get some much-needed cash in the early spring when you need to buy more seed and more tubers and then more seed again. When we introduce our bouquet subscription most people are impressed and say "Oh, what a luxury." or "Oh, if I won the lottery." but educate them that it really isn't an extravagant thing. Our subscriptions are priced very reasonably and a great gift amount. We have had a granddaugh-

ter order a subscription for her grandma for the last two Christmases. However, logistics can be difficult with subscriptions. You need to plan the delivery route or drop points. If you have a large number you may want to spread it out and do 25% every week so there is a constant flow, not 40 bouquets in one day. It's so fun delivering the bouquets, the smiles are almost instant. It's definitely a pick-me-up for the day!

"I do's" or not? The wedding business can be awesome for a flower farmer. It can also be very overwhelming. You need to be able to handle every type of bride and decide if she is your type too. If you do weddings, you will learn very quickly how to spot the bridezilla. The flowers that you grow may not be a match for every bride and that is okay. You need to work with people who appreciate and desire your flowers. Don't try to do every wedding that comes your way. You will regret it in the end. Start small with weddings. To the bride she is the only person (other than the groom) who matters on that day. You need to be able to let the bride know that you are totally there for her. Do not tackle more than one wedding in a day until you are experienced.

I am going to outline how I do weddings. I am by no means an expert. I do many weddings through the season but I am always learning how to do things better. In the initial contact I have the bride tell me a little about her wedding ideas and have her send me some pictures. Their picture selection tells a lot about what they are wanting. If the vision seems doable we meet at a local coffee shop and discuss the vision and the quantities. I make notes of flowers they like and don't like, colour choices, and shape of the design. I don't promise flowers and I let them know what to expect from our weddings. I bring my digital portfolio of some of our past work. Do not talk prices at the table; you will always sell yourself short. Make good notes about what she says and key points she liked. After the meeting I have a form storyboard on which I fill in the information. I attach pictures of my work that showcase the style or colour and add inspirational pictures from them. The quote is part of the storyboard.

I have only recently introduced a contract; I would have continued without one but this year I found who a bride tested me and I decided to make one. I keep files for each wedding and go over the storyboard several times before the wedding. During the week of the wedding I go over the wedding details again, and start to form ideas in my head of what the plan is. Wedding prep is done on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. I deliver the flowers to the bride, then to the venue and set up. A good tip is to make notes of what the bride looks like. Trust me, they all look the same when you walk in where they are getting their hair and makeup done—you want to make sure you are talking to the right lady! Instruct the bride again on proper care for her bouquet and the direction you intended it to be held.

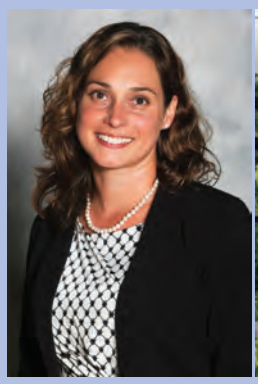
I always suggest that there is a mom or a responsible adult present with the men. I had a groom forget all the bouts! Also instruct them on how to wear a bout—it is the first time for many of them. The best compliment from a wedding client is having them refer someone to you. It's also fun when you do the bridesmaids from a previous wedding.

There are many different business models for selling your flowers. Just make sure you have a plan of what yours will look like. Plan to attend the tour this summer in the Niagara Region of Ontario where there will be a showcase of many different business models. There will be tours and discussions about large-scale wholesale growers with many acres in production and many employees, to a 1 ½-acre plot managed almost solely by one person. There is so much we can learn from each other. If you are driving to the event there will be a list of farms that will be open for you to visit. Dust off your passport, exchange some money (for a gain!) and come to Ontario and see that "Good things groooooow in Ontario".

Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

Bethany Baker, Elyria, OH
Jillian Baldschun, High Point Farms, Flintstone, GA
Stephanie Bargo, Lexington, KY
Amity Beane, Florabeane Flowers, Dixfield, ME
Jocelyn Bernard, The Flower Patch Trenton, Trenton, KY
Andrea Boudreau, Flora Borealis, Ancaster, ON, Canada
Shelli Bourque, Simple Leaf Farm, Almont, MI
Michaela Boyer, Flower Child Farms, Richmond Hill, GA
Kim Broshes, Urbana, OH
Alison Buck, Bay River Blooms, Merritt, NC
Carole Caplan, The Farm on Jennings, Ann Arbor, MI
Emily Anne Capule, The Honey Bee and the Hound, Corpus Christi, TX
Jill Carter, Summerhouse Farm, Granby, MO
Mary Ellen Chadd, Green Sparks Farm, Cape Elizabeth, ME
Nadine Charlton, Enderby, BC
Natasha Chortos, Floramere, Ruthven, ON, Canada
Andria Clancy, Hingham, MA
Michael Del Valle, Woodstock, GA
Linda DePersis, Barefoot Farm & Flowers, Clatskanie, OR
Kyle Dincans, Hockley, TX
Terri Doyle, Coastal Ridge Farm, Picayune, MS
Linda Elkins, Fairfield, PA
Susanne Flury, Bunches of Blooms, Phelpston, ON, Canada
Molly Gaeckle, Northerly Flora, Minneapolis, MN
Chuck and Nancy Gardetto, Copper Penny Farm, Hanover, MD
David Glick, Pinewood & Posies, Paradise, PA
Drew Groezinger, Stockton, IL
Marcia Harrington, Foster Road Farm, Elbridge, NY
Kimberley Hautau, Hautau and Sons Greenhouses, Branchville, NJ
Tina Higinbotham, Beloit, OH
Sheila Hlubucek, Reno, NV
Christine Hoffman, Foxglove/Twin Cities Flower Exchange, St. Paul, MN
Pamela S. Homfelt, Stuart Run Florals, Millboro, VA
Natalie Huntley, Raleigh, NC
Heather Hayden and Jason Romkema, Wainfleet, ON, Canada
Anne Jensen, Scottsdale, AZ
David Johnson, Raven Song Farm, Craftsbury, VT
Molly Johnson, Seagrass Flower Farm, St. Helens, OR
Jessica Jones, Russell Springs, KY
Harris Kaye, From the Ground Up Farm, Katonah, NY
Melinda Knuth, Hartford, SD
Heather Korger, La Crosse, WI
Kellie Kotalik, From the Ground Up Farm, New Fairfield, CT
Tiffany Lackey, North Corner Haven, Lancaster, SC
Karen LaMarsh, East End Stems, Riverhead, NY
Amanda Lawrence, Jenda Gardens, Boyceville, WI
Adam Lemieux, Johnny's Selected Seeds, Winslow, ME
Jim Lemire, Inevitable Farm, Southfield, MI
Christopher Lord, Rockland, ME
Donna Marshall, Marshall's Hillside Farm, Boonton Township, NJ
Jennifer McClendon, JenniFlora, Sebastopol, CA
Debbie McTavish, Florabundle, Pottstown, PA
Dana Milton, Lunablooms, Branford, CT
Rebecca Moreland, Red Barn Ranch, Harrisonville, MO
Kat Mullendore, Creston, IL
Liz Nabi, Alight Flower Farm, Charlottesville, VA
Whitney Nickless, Melon Acres CSA, Oaktown, IN
Christine O'Driscoll, Grand Rapids, MI
Charles Ochei, Pacesetters Landscape, Conyers, GA
Stevie Pegg, True North Flowers, Oshawa, ON
Regina Pennington, Sprouts and Flowers, Selmer, TN
Christy Ralphs, Nourish Gardens, New Zealand
Melisa Green and Randy Price, Wild Millie's Sweetflower Farm, Jonesboro, IN
Paula Rogalski, Rutherfordton, NC
Elizabeth Ross, Houston, TX
Pete Rotteveel, DutchGrown, West Chester, PA
Mary Jo Rumler, Florabundle, Linfield, PA
Kathleen Salisbury, Penn State Extension, Doylestown, PA
Denise Samuels, Inevitable Farm, Southfield, MI
Kelsey Sandbothe, Dry Creek Flower Farm, Jefferson City, MO
Lori and David Schmick, Sunshine Meadows Farm, Ortonville, MI
Julia Schreiber, UC Davis Student Experimental Farm, Davis, CA
Heather Schuh, HB Farm and Faith's Flowers, Bow, WA
Leigh Scott, Milton, GA
Tina Simcich, Olympia, WA
Ancima Smith, Blooms Cut Flowers, Oxford, MI
Kim Smith, Tilbury, ON, Canada
Leigh Smith, Mintstone Flower Farm, Charlotte, NC
Melissa Smith, Long Field Flower Farm, Oxford, MA
Stacey Spring, Langley, BC
Rachel Stavens, High Point Farms, Flintstone, GA
Priya Thakkar, Raising Joy Farm, Corvallis, OR
Holley Thompson, Little Ridge Farm, Kevil, KY
Deborah Titcombe, Fiddle Tree Farm, West Edmeston, NY
Jodie Van Zwieten, Powell, OH
Chelsie Voth, Buhl, ID
Jeanine Wardman, Verve Flower Farm, Blenheim, New Zealand
Mary Warner, Danielsville, GA
Cheryl Wells, Opossum Hollow Produce, Evansville, AR
Jill Whitehead, Rose Folk Flower Farm, Beamsville, ON, Canada
Ellisha Wiles, Greenflash Farm, Skillman, NJ
Cheryl Wunsch, Danielsville, GA

These Members Have Been with the ASCFG for Ten Years!

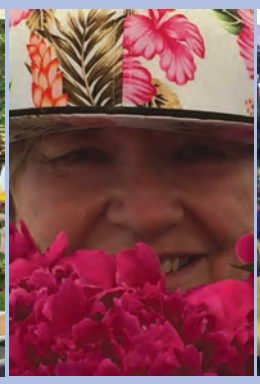


Jenny Carleo

Alicain Carlson

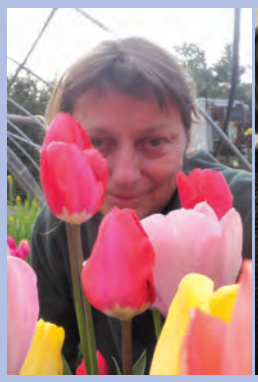
Barbara Lamborne

Thea Folls

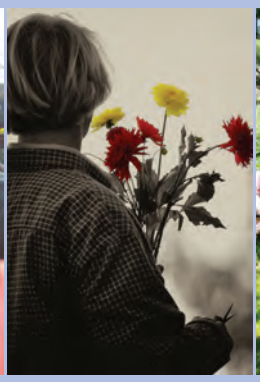


Kathleen Fliegauf

Marie Fowler



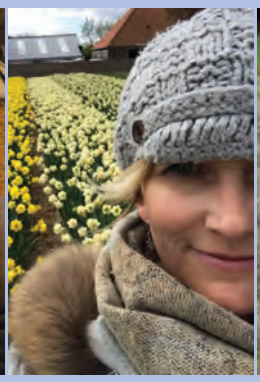
Margaret Muth Kirkby



Carrie McCann

Jeanie McKewan

Suzanne Montie



Dorothy Heath Morris

Suzanne Morrissey

Chris and Gary Pellett

Evelyn Pence

Rebecca Perry

Paula Rice

Dave Seitz

Photo unavailable

Monica Alvarez
Michael Cardosa
Susan Durio
Beth Foltz Kitchell
Annette Van Auken
Bernard Van Essendelft, Jr.
John Zysk

Meet the ASCFG members who have stepped forward to run for positions open on the ASCFG Board of Directors. Please review their information, and take just a few minutes to cast your vote when you receive an electronic ballot later this summer. Your participation is vital!

North and Central Regional Director

Jamie Rohda

Harvest Home, Waverly, Nebraska

My husband Norm and I have been growing specialty cut flowers for over 15 years. We joined the ASCFG in 2006, and attribute much of our success growing and selling flowers to all that we have learned from the association.

Our business has run the gamut from selling at a local farmers' market, doing full-service weddings, supplying flowers for local restaurants, and now selling to local florists and event designers.

In 2016, I was honored to be chosen as a mentor for the ASCFG's beginning Mentor Program. The program has been an incredibly rewarding experience: I feel like we have learned as much from our mentees as they have learned from us! Growers are few and far between here in the Midwest, but more are jumping on the local flower movement each year and I love encouraging them. We have been working to form a Midwest Farmer Florist Collaborative to encourage that growth.

The ASCFG has been such a huge contributor to our business; now I would like to give back by serving as Regional Director for the North and Central region.

Emily Watson

Stems Cut Flowers, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Why do I want to serve on the ASCFG Board of Directors? The short story is that I have gotten so much from this organization over the last nine years and I feel like it is time to give some of it back. I can say, without a doubt, that I would have given up after a couple of years if it were not for the knowledge and support of the wonderful members in this group.

The longer story is that with an education in biological conservation and a background in both floral design and landscaping, I decided to start a flower farm in 2008. I borrowed a little land from my grandparents at their farm in southeastern Wisconsin, and I don't think that any of us knew what we were in for. When I began Stems Cut Flowers my intention was for it to be a flower farm selling to florists and at farmers' markets, maybe an occasional wedding. Well, that occasional wedding turned into a nearly every weekend occurrence and it soon became evident that I was running two separate businesses. It eventually seemed like a good idea to officially make it two separate businesses, and in 2015 I launched a floral design studio in Milwaukee and named it Wood Violet.

My farm, and both of my businesses, have gone through a lot of transitions over the years. But I believe that it has offered me a unique perspective in so many aspects of what we all do. I grow and sell specialty cuts. I buy flowers from other growers in my area. I also buy flowers from the regular wholesale place (only American grown). I do weddings, so many weddings, daily deliveries, and a flower CSA. And, of course, I employ people. I can't do it all by myself. But even if I could, I am not sure why I would want to.

South and Central Regional Director

Gretchen O'Neil

Petals, ink Floral, Manor, Texas

Hailing from New England where I developed a love for creative writing and flowers, I've been in Texas for the past 13 years where I turned that passion into a thriving business. I founded my floral design company, Petals, ink., in 2009 in Austin — a city renowned for taco trucks, heat, and entrepreneurship.

I didn't start out as a grower. Having been in Texas only a handful of years and being a transplant from the deep freeze of Vermont, it took a while to acclimate and learn a whole new language of growing in zone 8b. As my floral design business took off and the availability of fresh, beautiful product at market was constantly hit or miss, I started tearing up my yard and testing different varieties. As it turned out some of my favorites like sweet peas, anemones, and ranunculus grew here just fine!

Over the course of the next few years we'd grow thousands of stems on our tiny corner lot of our home a mile from downtown.

Then, in the summer of 2015 we found our farm just 18 miles northeast in Manor. It's been full steam ahead ever since as we continue to build up our growing space and focus on connecting with local restaurants, venues, and wedding clients excited about the farm to table/field to vase movement.

In February of 2016 we launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds for the renovation of an old Chevy Step Van to be the first 100% locally grown mobile flower shop in Austin. The concept was born out of a love of growing, a belief in the importance of locally-grown products, and an avenue for Austin area flower farmers to band together and create a product unlike any other available in town. The campaign was a great success and we are scheduled to launch in the Summer of 2017. The truck will be featuring blooms from fellow ASCFG members Rita Anders, Cuts of Color, and Mike Milligan, Prickly Pair Farm.

The relationships and connections I've made with growers nationwide through ASCFG have been a constant source of inspiration and momentum as I continue to grow my own flower farm. The learning is never complete, and every morsel of wisdom shared is valuable. Through serving on the board I hope to connect more folks who share a passion for flowers, provide insight into the world of wedding design and social media marketing, and support growers in my region battling similar challenges and celebrating successes large and small.

Shanti Rade

Whipstone Farm, Paulden, Arizona

I came into farming by chance through a high school internship. Even though I grew up in a rural area, prior to that internship, I had never had the experience of planting a seed or growing a garden. I later went to college and earned a degree in agroecology. I traveled and worked on several farms. I met my husband, also a farmer, and we have been growing our farm business in Arizona for the last 15 years.

We started with vegetables on a quarter acre, and grew our farm steadily each year. We added flower production on a whim about five years in and I got bit with the flower bug in a big way. We currently grow over 100 crops on 20 acres for farmers' markets, restaurants, and CSA subscriptions. A growing portion of our business is florist sales and designing for weddings. While I help manage the diverse enterprises on the farm, I'm pretty much thinking about flowers constantly. I'm also thinking about marketing strategies, budgets, employees, P&L's, and so many other things that I didn't expect to do in farming.

It took me a long time to find the ASCFG. Once I knew about it, it took me another couple of years to actually join (still kicking myself for that one). With very few flower farmers in my region, for a long time I felt like I was wondering in the desert (literally and figuratively) with just a few books on flower farming and *Growing for Market* for guidance. I basically learned by trial and error. Joining the ASCFG has been a game-changer for me. I didn't realize the wealth of knowledge and the community of amazing growers just waiting out there. I can't begin to describe how much I have benefited from being a member. I would be honored to serve on the board of the ASCFG. I bring lots of non-profit board experience with me, the skill of running a successful business, and a huge desire to help move the organization forward.

Cut Flowers of the Year Nominees

Fresh Cut of the Year
Daucus 'Dara'
Rudbeckia 'Sahara'
Dusty miller 'New Look'
Eucalyptus 'Silver Drop'
Lisianthus 'Doublini White'

Woody Cut of the Year
Mockorange hybrid
Thornless blackberry 'Triple Crown'
Spirea 'Bridal Veil'
Hydrangea paniculata 'Quick Fire'
Quince 'Cameo Peach'

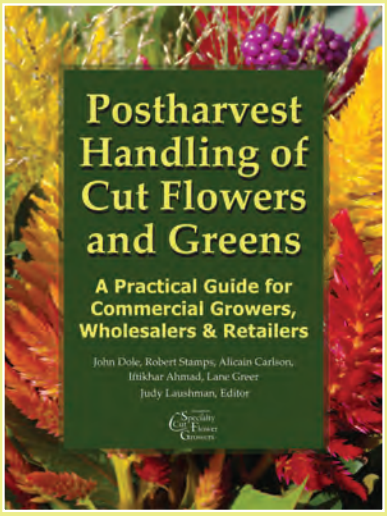
Cut Bulb of the Year
Tulip 'Menton'
Fritillaria 'Persica'
Ranunculus 'Almandine Salmon'
Anemone 'Galilee White'
Hyacinth 'Gypsy Queen'

Spend a day at one of the fastest-growing and successful cut flower farms in the country! In less than ten years, Steve and Gretel Adams have created a profitable urban farm which values maintaining a healthy environment as it produces quality cut flowers.

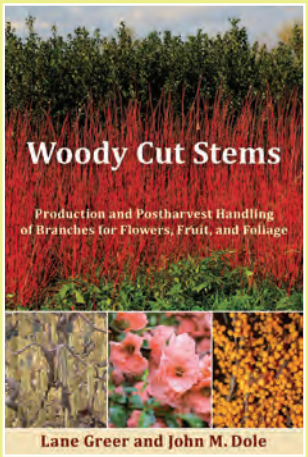
The preliminary schedule includes morning tours of both Sunny Meadows' sites to see field and hoophouse production of a wide range of annuals, perennials, and shrubs. Lunch will be on the farm, followed by afternoon speaker sessions, and plenty of networking.

The full program, as well as registration information, will be available soon.

NEW FROM THE ASCFG!



Postharvest Handling of Cut Flowers and Greens: A Practical Guide for Commercial Growers, Wholesalers, and Retailers is the most current reference to address processes involved in cut flower production and handling. The collaborative effort behind this book has produced a critical resource for cut flower growers, retail and wholesale florists, and designers. Detailed information on harvesting and processing, ethylene control and postharvest testing, and forcing woody cuts is presented. More than 200 genera are covered in a comprehensive and easy-to-use layout, including annuals, perennials, bulbs, and woody plants, as well as a wide range of foliage and tropical species.



Woody Cut Stems: Production and Postharvest Handling of Branches for Flowers, Fruits, and Foliage had been out of print for several years, and was recently reprinted by the ASCFG. This textbook is essential for anyone growing woody vines, shrubs or trees for cut flowers. Lane Greer and John Dole know what kind of information growers need, and they deliver it, in their own inimitable style.

Order at www.ascfg.org or call (440) 774-2887!

Thank You, 2017 Sponsors!

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ASCFG Mentor Program Update

We received a record number—94—of Mentee applications for this cycle. That's sayin' something! The Mentor Committee will need plenty of time to pore through every page, and make matches with appropriate Mentors. All applicants will be notified this fall.

From the DIRECTOR

Judy M. Laushman

Three pieces in this issue have intersecting points of interest.

I had a ball transcribing the *New York Times* article about the status of the United States—at least the northeastern sector—floral industry in 1870. One of my favorite images is the one of "putting the unsold residuum of a day's itinerary in a wet mop over night and saving it for the next morning's traffic". We did our best to find original photos representative of the people, flowers, events, and designs mentioned, but didn't come up with any of flowers stuck in mop heads.

The narrative describing the "Floral Bohomians" (*sic*) and the "Bedouins of Flora", as impolitic as those terms may be considered, sounded familiar. It seems parallel to the often-discussed topic of the North American floral industry returning to its original roots, where the farmer was also the transporter, the seller, and sometimes the designer. Here we see the personifications of those long-ago growers, which dovetail with much of the ASCFG membership: small growers doing it all, many as one-person businesses.

All growers, regardless of experience or farm size, need assistance when production issues rise to a level when they can't be managed in house. But, as Peter Konjoian and Raymond Cloyd discuss in this issue, it's no longer the case that the friendly neighborhood extension agent will stop by your farm or greenhouse to diagnose a pest or disease issue, recommend treatment, and even come back later to check on the results.

The nature of our "specialty" cut flowers, as compared to bedding plants, poinsettias, or even nursery stock, means that pest and disease problems aren't always familiar to the few remaining extension personnel. The ASCFG is extremely fortunate to have entomologist Stanton Gill from the University of Maryland system, Wisconsin's plant pathologist Brian Hudelson, and James DelPrince, Mississippi State University, who generously share their expertise at our meetings, in publications, and through social media. Let's hope that future USDA budgets will continue their funding.

At the same time, and as always the case for this organization, our members know that they can turn to each other for advice and shared experience. The ASCFG is well known for its uncommonly generous population. Using our sixteen-year-old, but still relevant, online Bulletin Board, and Members Only Facebook page, as well as face to face networking at meetings and on farm tours, our growers do their best to make sure their colleagues may share the most accurate information on all kinds of topics.

One issue with social media, as Mimo Davis alludes in her Regional Report, is that the soft-focus, sun-kissed images often seen on web sites and blogs can create unrealistic expectations for new growers, or frustrations for established growers perhaps exhausted by summer heat, early frosts, or incompetent labor. It's almost refreshing when people share the reality of unexpected weather events, deer or insect damage, or just plain plant failure. It happens, at some point, to *everyone*. Flower farming, like old age, is not for sissies.

No matter your stage in the cut flower business, please don't store unsold bouquets in wet mop heads.

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Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers

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info@fredgloeckner.com
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